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THE SQUARE PEG
or
THE GUN FELLA

ALSO BY JOHN MASEFIELD

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GOOD FRIDAY: *A Play in Verse*

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BERENICE. (*Adapted from the French of Jean Racine*)

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR; or, The Pangs of Love. *A Play in Four Acts*

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GALLIPOLI

THE OLD FRONT LINE

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

RECENT PROSE

WITH THE LIVING VOICE

THE WANDERER OF LIVERPOOL

POETRY: A Lecture

THE CONWAY

THE SQUARE PEG

or

THE GUN FELLA

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD



WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD
LONDON :: TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED 1937

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE WINDMILL PRESS, KINGSWOOD, SURREY

To
MY WIFE

ROBERT FRAMPTON MANSELL, the inventor and manufacturer of the Mansell Gun, stopped his car, and leaned from his driving-seat, to call to the ditcher at the roadside. "Is this the way to *Mullples*?"

"Yes," the man called. "You keep on, like you be going to Hicks's. That's a farm, Hicks's. Then you turn at the gate. It's all wrote up, on the gate."

"Is it far?"

"No, not to say far. 'Tis a step."

"Thanks."

"Very welcome, surely," the man said.

He set the car moving, and looked at the car mirror, to see the two people behind him; his fiancée, Margaret Holtspur, a woman of over thirty, with a face both grave and merry, and his old father, Bob Mansell, a frail and sweet old man.

"We're on the track," he said. "The chap knew it."

"We're enjoying ourselves," Margaret said.

It was a drive to enjoy. They were in a new, fine country, in bright October weather, all the brighter for a little rain the night before. The hips were scarlet in the hedges; the roots intensely green against the plough.

"It's all wrote up, on the gate," he called; "so look out for a gate."

He was driving in a poor country road, which had never been tarred; as he drove, little flights of finches kept wavering out of the hedges in front of him. An old, red-brick farm was on the left. It must once have been a most trim little manor house.

"That'll be Hicks's," he said. "It's been a good place, once."

He drove on along the lifeless road; he had seldom been in a more deserted part of England.

"It's this pale clay," he explained. "There are seven square miles of it, just here, and nothing will really do on it."

"How did you know that?" Margaret asked.

"I looked it up on my geological map last night," he explained, "and then I looked up the technical terms in my *Compendium of Soils*. This piece is called the 'Tatshire Waste, a well-known geological curiosity, long the despair of the farmer'."

"Look out," Margaret cried. "You said, 'Look out for a gate.'"

"This is the place," he said; "and there it is, wrote up."

There, on their left, were the remains of old brick walls, which had once supported folding iron gates. The gates had long since gone. The entrance was blocked by stakes and old barbed wire, with part of a farm-gate, unhinged and unhasped. On this gate a board bore the word "MULLPLES" in irregular letters of white paint.

Frampton Mansell hopped out of the car to heave and prop this gate open. Margaret watched him, with admiration. He was in some ways a fine figure of a man. He was of about forty-two years of age, active, vigorous, compact and with an air of force. He stood about five feet six inches. All his bearing indicated decision, keeping to the point, and getting his own way. His dress was good and costly, but somewhat loud in cut and colour; he wore a tweed hat, shooting jacket and knickerbockers. When he turned, to look at Margaret, he showed a bright, humorous eye and a high colour. In his youth, he had discovered that he resembled one of the portraits of Sir Francis Drake; this had influenced his life profoundly, as Margaret had recently accidentally discovered. He wore

the pointed torpedo beard of Drake, and the full, curving moustachioes; he had also made his eyebrows to arch. He walked with a swagger and stood with an air. Guns and explosives had been his interest since infancy; there was something destructive and explosive about him. He gave the impression that his main occupation was making somebody anxious to be back among his orange trees in St. Mary Port.

It took him some little time to get the gate open, as it was backed up by a bit of an old iron bedstead on the far side.

"There you are, my Peggy," he called; "now I'll just drive through and block the gate behind me; there may be stock in the field."

When he had closed it, he stopped at the side of the car. "Now, my Peggy," he said, "what are your first impressions of *Mullples*? It's not a very prosperous approach."

"We'll go on and see," she said. "It's a most romantic dip in front there; anything may be there. We shall come in sight of the valley, don't you think?"

"We'll soon know," he said. "This is the ninth house we've looked at. Nine's a lucky number, they say."

Two hundred yards farther on, they passed a ruin, which looked like a fallen pigsty. A stone spout beside it was spouting clear water which had gouged itself a channel beside the driving track. Almost at once, after passing this, the banks of the lane fell away, so that a delightful valley lay open to them.

"Here you are, my Peggy," he said, "here's *Mullples Valley*, and there's the house, what is left of it."

He stopped the car, and got out to look. After half a minute, he came to the car and opened the door for Margaret.

"I don't think we shall look at a tenth," he said. "This seems good enough."

His old father was peering into a map. "I'll get out here, if you don't mind, Fram," he said, "while you and Maggie go down to see the house. I want to have a look at that ruin we've just passed, where the water was gushing. It's marked as *St. Martin's Well*, in this map of mine, and I'm interested in St. Martin."

He climbed out, with the help of Margaret and his son. He was only a few years short of eighty, and had not been very well of late.

"I'll poke about in the ruins," he said, "and then, when you've looked at the house, you can pick me up there."

"Won't you come down to the house?" they asked.

"No, thankee, I've seen enough of these houses to let. But it oughtn't to be called the *Priory*. My map says the site of the priory was lower down."

He had with him, as always, a strong gardening-stick, fitted with a spud at the end; with this, he walked up towards the ruin. Margaret and Frampton drove slowly on towards the house, which stretched away from them on the other side of a brook.

"Tudor brick," Frampton said. "See the twisted chimneys?"

"It has been a lovely place," she said.

It had been noble, but it was plain to anyone that fire, water, poverty, brutality, avarice and helplessness, had all wreaked harms upon it.

"There's a dovecote," Frampton said, "in the orchard beyond. And one blue pigeon."

"What is the other building, beyond?" Margaret asked.

"Stables, I should think," he said. He stopped the car, looked and said: "Well, Peggy, what d'ye think about it? It's there or thereabout, wouldn't you say?"

She quoted from *Hart Leap Well*:

“‘A jolly place, said she, in times of old,
But something ails it now, the place is curst.’”

“I don’t believe much in curst,” he said. “It’s been let get into a mess. It looks to me more like poverty. Father is right about the priory. Look down the brook to the left, there; those mounds and tumps are the priory. This would have been the guest-house, perhaps.”

“Don’t you think there would have been a gate-house, before a guest-house?”

“I should imagine,” he said, “that the chap who got the grant of the priory buildings, pulled down the gate-house, which would have stood about here, and used the stuff to enlarge the house itself. I think I’m wrong about that far building. It can’t be stables. What do you make of it?”

“I don’t know what to make of that,” she said, “I don’t know what it can be.”

“It’s a noble place,” he said, “and the valley it stands in is a dream. Don’t you think it’s beautiful?”

“In a way, very,” she said.

She was thinking that Frampton had already decided to buy the place and make it their first home; her life, or a part of it, would be passed here; and from the first, something in the scene had struck her as sinister; perhaps that was too strong a word, but something of the desolation of heart of those who had lived here had impressed the things near it. There was something wrong with the place. Men and women had lived a great, free and splendid life there once, but as for those

“Their hearts went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.”

It had been a place of fallen pride and misery since then.

"This man, Knares-Yocksir," he said, "the present owner, will be a lunatic. He may not sell, when it comes to the point. Why hasn't he sold long ago? Scores of people would have given him a mint for a place like this. I'll stop the car here. We might have a *coup d'œil* before we go in."

They stood together and looked down at the noble old house before them. The Tudor design had been severe and straight. In the reign of James the First, the owner had built on a porch or doorway, in a half round, crowned with pinnacles which must once have been bright, with weathercocks or devices, now gone. Along the front of the house was a terrace, still marked at intervals with mounds, where urns of flowers had collapsed. The grass below this terrace was gone back into the rough. Beyond the grass, farther from the house, was a long, black pond, edged with old brick and almost choked with water-weed. In one little space of water, in the middle of it, a moorhen oared to and fro. Farther away, on a lower level and parallel with the pond, was a second, choked like the other. At its ends were two charming little summer-houses, copied from the designs of Sir Christopher Wren. All the building showed signs of neglect and disorder. Some broken window-panes had been stuffed with rags. Some of the roof had given, and another part of it sagged. The jasmine which had grown up the walls had grown to great thickness. In one place, near the porch, some recent gale had torn a mass of it away. It lay now in a mat across the terrace. As they were standing close to the end of the house, they were conscious of a noise of falling water.

"Hear that?" Frampton said. "The brook's got into the cellars."

He opened the warped gate which lay across the bridge over the stream.

"Tudor bridge, too," he said. "Victorian gate. I'm not sure they haven't let it go too far." That end of the house had a very green-mouldy look.

"It looks very rotten and damp here," she said, "and the wall's cracked."

"The Tomfool owner's been cracked," he said, "to let that sycamore grow there, and drip all down the wing; let alone the brook in the cellar."

They walked along the soft grass of the terrace in front of the house, stepping over fallen jasmine, and passing windows broken or boarded up. At the Jacobean porch, Frampton stopped and stared with kindling eyes. Margaret watched him, knowing that he was excited by the house, and determined to have it. She was impressed by it; she had not seen anything like it; and the well-watered valley delighted her; but yet, within her an instinct rose, that there was something wrong with the place, and that she would not like to live there.

At the porch, they paused for a moment, to look at some children's scratchings done on the brick with sharp nails. They had been done there in the seventeenth century, and represented a man on horseback, and a windmill.

"Well done, too," Frampton said. "No boy in this county could do them half as well now."

He took the old iron bell-pull which hung beside the inner door, and rang. It was stiff in its bearings, but his tug upon it did waken a kind of tinkle inside the house. No one had come in or out of that door for a long time; the spiders had spun across and across. Margaret pointed this out to him.

"This door is not in use, now," she said. "Look at the spiders' webs. Don't you think we'd better go to the back, somewhere?"

"I'll ring again," he said, and did so. "We've come the wrong

way, of course; we ought to have come from Stubbington. That's good old iron on the door; done at the local forge, no doubt. I'll try again."

He took the bell-pull once more and gave it a tug.

"Someone's coming," Margaret said.

They heard footsteps inside the house, and then a fumbling at bolts and lock within. Then a female voice said;

"Who is there, please?"

"We've come to see the house," Frampton said.

"Are you from Mr. Piggott, please?"

"Yes, with an order to view."

"Will you come round to the back, please?" the voice asked. "The key is too stiff for me to turn."

"Which is the way to the back?" Frampton asked.

"Not the way you came in," the voice answered. "Keep on to your left, across the grass, then through the gap; you'll see the path then."

"So we've been watched," Frampton said, as they moved off. "Not the way we came in, quotha."

They followed the path to a court or orchard in which a few old apple-trees supported clothes-lines on which some sheets were drying. A woman stood at the back door, looking shrewdly at them. She was of a medium height, and strongly built, with fine brown hair, touched with grey, with keen brown eyes, and an expression of disdain or pride. Margaret thought that the face might once have been merry, but that life had been too hard, to let much merriment stay there. The woman was neatly dressed, and wore an old-fashioned big star-brooch set with small diamonds. She had an apron over her dress, and looked as though she had been cooking. Frampton thought that she had a very beautiful pair of arms with wonderful skin.

"Is this Miss Knares-Yocksir?" he asked.

She moved her head to say yes.

"I've got an order to view here." He handed it to her.

"Come in," she said.

She was a lady, though she had come down in the world. She welcomed Margaret in, with charming manners. She understood very well, that the pair were engaged, and that Frampton was one who might be a rough customer.

"You had better keep your things," she said to Margaret. "The house is chill. But perhaps you would like to sit in the kitchen? There's a fire there."

"Oh, no, I want to see the house," Margaret said.

"Perhaps you will see the house first," she said to Frampton. "My father isn't very well, but I will show you the house, and you shall see him afterwards, if you wish."

She showed them the house. It had been a noble thing, even as late as 1890, but it was now all come to grief. One room she did not show.

"My father is in bed there," she explained.

Most of the rooms were empty; the furniture, pictures, and other fittings had been disappearing bit by bit in the last hundred years.

"This room was panelled," Frampton said. "Have you any of the panelling put away?"

"Oh, it was sold," she said. "And the other room was panelled too; some Americans bought it."

One small Sheraton cabinet containing four pieces of Leeds porcelain was the only beautiful thing remaining to them.

"This is my room," she said, throwing open a door.

Frampton glanced at its bareness. A photograph, evidently of her brother, a young man in uniform, was on the mantel.

He judged that the brother had been the hope of the house, and had been killed in the War.

"Tell me," he said, "what is the eighteenth-century building outside the house on this side?"

"That is the theatre," she said.

"What is a theatre doing here?" he asked. Mr. Piggott had not mentioned a theatre, but had said: "Interesting period out-houses."

"It was built in the eighteenth century," she said. "Sir Jocelyn Petersbury built it. Afterwards it was sold to my great-grandfather, who used it as a kennels, I believe, for his fox-hounds."

"Might we see it? Is there anything to see?"

"Certainly."

She took them out of the house, and along the path through the field.

"The audience part of it is untidy," she said, "but you can see the stage." She had a key in her pocket; she opened the door for them. "It's very bleak in here," she said. "I wouldn't stay long, if I were you."

They entered to a pleasant room, so well-proportioned that it was delightful to be in it.

"This is always called the green room," she said. "I don't know why. The actors and actresses used to meet here, I believe. Some of the old gilding is still there." It was true; the fine old cornice still had traces of gilding visible through the dirt and cobwebs. "This is the way to the rest of it," the woman said.

She led them into a dark, cold passage, moving quickly in front of them. She opened doors, so that they could see that they were in a passage which had the wings of the stage on the one hand and a row of small dressing-rooms on the other.

"These are the dressing-rooms of the actors and actresses," the woman said. "They had not much room; even the best; some are tiny."

She went into one of the dressing-rooms, and opened a shutter. A ray of sunlight came into the passage. "Come in," the woman said. "This is a chief dressing-room."

They went into a cubby-hole, lit by a window from which the shutter had been turned. Some of the old wall-paper was on the wall. A neat old fireplace was there. Over it was an ancient mirror, its glass foxed with the fouling which besets old mirrors. Somebody had written on it with a diamond. Frampton pointed to the writing.

"What is the poem?" he asked.

The woman had not known that there was a poem. Frampton, with his driving glove, rubbed some of the filth from the glass, so that he could read one line; then, judging that what remained could not be indecent, the other. He read it aloud.

"What tender raptures thrill in youth and age
When chaste Monimia pleads upon the stage."

"I'll bet she wasn't as chaste as all that," he said.

"You don't know," Margaret said. "The writer had probably tried the matter and wrote from knowledge." She leaned forward to examine the writing. "I expect he kneeled on a chair while he wrote," she said. "The glass is let into the wall; he could not have had it down. What a pity the glass cannot show us his face, or Monimia's."

"I don't want to see Monimia's face, if she were as chaste as all that," he said. "What staggers me about this building, is the elegance of its proportion. It looked small,

when we were outside, but see how spacious it really is."

The woman had moved along the passage and had opened more doors and shutters.

"You can see the stage, now," she said.

It was true: they could. A step brought them to the verge of it. The supports for the scenes still stood, and there were slots in the floor, along which these supports, when set with scenery, had once been run. On some of the supports there were still the tin sconces for the candles which had once lit the scenes. Frampton strode on to the stage proper. It was, as he judged, very long and narrow, with a considerable rake. The row of footlights had been removed. Right across their line a partition of lath and plaster had been put.

"That is the division for the fowl-house and kennels," the woman said.

The stage was heaped with garden things: packing straw, mouldy hay, pea- and bean-sticks, rhubarb-pots, flower-pots, some bricks, seed-boxes and flower-frames. There were also the remains of tools, spades with broken handles, rakes with missing teeth, saws rusted past sharpening, forks with the prongs gone, etc.

"When was the stage last used for a play?" Margaret asked.

"Oh, long, long ago," the woman said, "in Sir Jocelyn's time, 1777, the paper in my father's desk says. The play was called *Zimoiere the Terrible*; it was a French play."

"And when was the partition put up?" Frampton asked.

"After my great-grandfather bought it," she said. "He wanted a place for his hounds; so he shut off the stage, and put the hounds where the audience used to be."

"Yes, of course, he would have wanted a place for his hounds," Frampton said.

It was dark near the partition; the woman moved away, and

let in light. Close to them, one on each side of the stage, were stage boxes.

"Do you see those, my Peggy?" Frampton said. "Those were the seats of the wicked lords. They lolled here, looking at the chaste Monimia at close quarters. When they sat in one of these, they could see her in the round, not as a picture in a frame. When she had a moving moment, or an aside to say, she played it or said it to the lord here. When the curtain came down, she was drawn into one or other of these boxes, and offered a knee, a rummer of port, and a dishonourable proposal. There has been some eye work and *double entendre* work between the stage and those boxes, I'll bet."

"What rubbish," Margaret said. "Even the worst of your lords had their better feelings, and the women touched those better feelings. If the lords came here to make dishonourable proposals, they repented when they saw Monimia play. They offered her their hearts, what remained of them, and their coronets, if they were not in pawn."

"Might we see the kennel part?" Frampton asked.

It was cold in that gloomy place. The woman led them out into the sunlight, and along the building to its farther end. At this point, the field had been paved, but the grass had grown over the paving so as to hide every trace of it. The woman unlocked a door, and threw it open. They could look into the big, bare auditorium. The gallery of seats, which had been a part of the original design, had been removed; but the marks of it still showed. The sleeping-benches for the hounds still remained. Poultry had perched above them. They were filthy, littered with old feathers and bits of broken egg-shell.

"We used to keep poultry here," the woman said. "Will you excuse me, if I go in, to see if my father wants anything? You might care to look at the grounds at the back and over

there. If you wish to see my father afterwards, perhaps you'll come to the house when you're ready."

"Well, Peggy," Frampton said, when the woman had gone, "we mustn't be too long. I'll go up to explore on this side, and get all the snapshots I can while the sun lasts. Will you have a look round on your side?"

"All right," she said.

"Are you pleased?" he asked.

"It's rather a sad place, don't you think?" she said.

"It's been allowed to get its socks rather over its boots," he said.

When he had gone, she walked back past the place where the brook was falling into the cellars. Turning up-stream, she found a fallen willow, by which she could cross the flood to a jungle and ruin beyond. A trampled space there had been the summer camping-place of a tramp and his lady, who had left some boots, rags, ashes and a bit of old sock. The walls were all ruined here, with ivy, old apple-trees and triumphing nettles five feet high, and hard as reed. Beyond the wall was what had once been a rose garden, now all wild and brambled. Some of the trees were ten feet high and bright with hips. A stone pedestal was in the midst of the space. She walked to it. It had once borne a sundial, which had been brutally wrenched away, apparently quite recently, for the marks of the jemmy were fresh. At the end of the rose-garden was another beautiful little summer-house, from which the roof had gone. The floor had been wrenched away for firing. From this summer-house, she had a good view of the back of the Manor.

A jungle lay beyond her, of sloes, hawthorn, nettles, brambles, thistles, hazels, goutweed, elders and sycamores. All had been sheltered and well-watered there, and all had grown lushly. She found a sort of track, made by rabbits perhaps.

Going along this, she heard continually the strange and moving cry of moorhens. She stopped to listen to the cry, which had always delighted her. As she stood, she heard overhead the mournful sweet laughter of a curlew. She saw him, with his curved beak and crooked wing, going off into his lonesome.

"O blessed bird," she thought, "would I could go where you go and know what you know."

After floundering through some thickets, she came through the jungle to the lip of a long narrow pond, the edges of which had once been bricked. Thirty yards of clear water were there, the rest was choked with reed and flag. Two wild duck went up as she came in sight, and some moorhens jerked away into cover. Water was gushing from a broken, but partly jammed sluice into a lower pond, which was much more completely blocked with reed, flag and other tangle. She went past this into drier ways, where she saw rabbits and smelt the reek of fox close to. She came out at a place where once a mill had stood. The mill had gone, every trace of it, except the grass-grown dam. She went up the rise, expecting to come to the mill-leat or race, but found to her surprise that she was staring at a lake, a quarter of a mile long by one hundred yards across. Woods came down on both sides of it; herons and wild duck went up from before her, the herons with easy flaps, the ducks with a swift scutter.

She had ever loved to be by waters, to hear their noises and to watch their creatures; now, all about her was the peace of waters, with reeds rustling, moor-hens chirking, brooks plashing. All this was within two hundred yards of the house.

She turned back, by an easier way on the grass, towards some ilex trees on rising ground above the theatre. A path led her to the ruins of yet another old summer-house, falling to pieces like everything else on the estate, but she

felt a thrill when she looked from its door to the view.

It faced very nearly west, over a great quiet valley. A darkness far away on the south-west was the sea. Opposite her were distant hills. A window, far away on the right, caught the sun, so that at first she thought that a house was blazing. Then a cloud shadow began to move across the valley towards her, almost like a living thing. It was one of the sights which she most dearly loved to watch; she watched it now, so intently that she never heard Frampton creeping near upon the grass. The intentness of her gaze made Frampton feel that he had never seen her so beautiful. He stood still, to watch what she was watching; she nodded, but did not turn her head.

Less than half a mile in front of them, beyond the dip in which the road ran, was a rising covered with wood. It was a good big covert, running out into the valley there. There were some hollies in the nearer hedge and a clump of fir-trees at the summit of its jut. As the two watched, the shadow swept over the wood and passed from it, leaving these dark green fir-trees vivid against the faint colour of the sky beyond. It was a most beautiful moment. Three fir-trees made Frampton think of the dark silhouette of a ship, seen long before at Corinth. Margaret quoted the lines:—

“There were three pines upon the comb
That, when the sun flared and went down,
Showed like three warriors reiving home
The plunder of a burning town.”

“Who wrote that?” Frampton asked.

“Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian poet.”

“That’s the effect he describes all right. What do you think of the place, now that you’ve seen it?”

"I liked the water," she said, "and I love that wood. What is it called?"

"I'll tell you in a minute," he said, spreading his map and turning it. "Here we are," he said, pointing. "There is the Butt, that distant hill. The wood is called Spirr Wood, SPIRR, whatever that may mean."

"Do you think that you could buy it?"

"If it's for sale. I don't know whether the man here owns it. Why?"

"If we're to live here, I'd love to have that wood as a bird sanctuary."

"It would make a good one; but you could make as good a one nearer the house."

"No. I might have cats at the house; that wouldn't be fair on the birds. Can you see if there is a brook running through the wood?"

He glanced at the map, and said:

"Yes, a good brook; it runs just the other side of the high ground. You would get the water birds."

"Would you mind if we just walked to the wood to see?"

"Come on," he said. "It'll be muddy, but it won't take more than a few minutes."

The covert had the tumbledown, ill-kept look of much of that countryside. They entered by a gap in the hedge. They came soon to a lovely little glen between the fir-tree crest on the left and a rise peopled (since they looked like old men) with aged thorns. In the midst was a grassy patch, now a shallow pool from the floods. It was a place of singular beauty; a pagan would at once have placed an altar to its genius there.

"Do you think that this may have been a beaver-meadow?" Margaret asked.

"I wouldn't wonder," he said. "They're said to have

been in England. Would you like to introduce beavers?"

"I would indeed," she said.

They walked on, past the little valley. When they had gone a few yards farther, Frampton said:

"There's a great reek of fox here."

"There is, indeed," she said; "he must have just gone by."

"No," he said, pointing to a trampled patch ahead. "No. They were hunting here yesterday, or the day before. Look at these tracks. They killed and ate the fox here. The scent will hang for days sometimes in this weather. This is where they broke him up, poor chap; and these are all the pad-marks of the hounds."

The place still stank of the slaughter, and gave them both a feeling of being haunted by a terrible event. Frampton looked about him.

"He'll have been making for shelter somewhere here," he said. "He'll have been making for an earth; and, by Jove, I see it, I think; there in the slope. You see; they have got him just at his door; his earth is stopped."

A couple of stout stakes had been driven inside the earth-mouth.

"Do you mean, that they stop up the holes that a fox might escape into?"

"Why, yes, my Peggy," he said. "These chaps are sportsmen, that is, they want a better time than the other fellow. They aren't going to spend all their money to let the fox get into a hole every half-mile or so, and stop their gallop, no fear. They want to make him run. So an old chap rides around on a pony and stops the possible holes."

"What a loathsome thing," she said. "Pull out the stakes, Fram."

"It's a bit late in the day for that poor chap," he said, as he

knelt and, with some difficulty, got them up. "It's too late for him, but it may come in handy for the next one. I rather think that fox-hounds might a little disturb your beavers, if you had them," he said.

As they walked back, he said: "I believe you don't often see beavers. They move at night; and then, they are said to be very good to eat and the fur is precious. I dare say you'd have to have a warden, or people would come to poach them. Then, they would be said to kill the game, probably, or spoil the hunting or something."

Near the house, they stopped for a moment to look at the old place; it was very beautiful, in the late autumnal sun.

"Well, what do you think, Peggy?" he said. "I must go in to see this man about it now. Would you like this place as your home?"

"It is very beautiful," she said, "and I know that you've set your heart on it. It could be made the most beautiful place almost, in the whole wide world."

"But you don't like it?"

"I think I could love it, but I know that I would love it better if I had the Spirr Wood; I love that place."

"You shall have it, if it's to be had," he said. "But it may not be for sale."

"I don't want to seem to be making a bargain with you, Fram. If you love this place, have it; in many ways it is most beautiful. If we have the Spirr Wood, do you think that my cousin, Timothy Holtspur, might be the warden? He would be so happy living alone in the wood there, painting the things there."

Frampton wrinkled his nose, in a way he had, at the mention of Timothy, who was not much of a painter, and something of a drunkard.

"It might make Timothy pull up his socks," he said. "So I'll go in and see this, whatever he is, Knares-Yocksir. If he's like his name he'll be unique.

"About Timothy," he added: "If he were warden, you would expect him to have a hut, or tiny cottage, right in the covert?"

"Yes, he wouldn't mind that; he'd love to be right away, among wild things."

"There's a place well above the water," he said, "where we could get in a very nice cottage. But how about a stiff winter there, and getting his supplies?"

"The people who bring our things could leave things for him," she said, "and he could come in to us, once a week, and bring his drawings."

He wrinkled his nose again, for he did not much value the drawings, so far.

"Did you ever meet old Bill," he said, "Old Bill the Bosun, the bird-painter? He lives on a bird sanctuary in Essex somewhere. I could get some pointers from him."

At the house, the woman was waiting.

"My father will be glad to see you now," she said, "if you wish to see him."

"I won't stay," Margaret said. "I'll go out to your father."

Frampton went in to see the sick man on his bed. He found him like most sick men, perverse, irritable and unwilling to make a decision. He was the grandson of the man who had put the hounds into the theatre; he had come down in the world from want of intelligence, more than from any failing, such as drink. He did not get on with his daughter, and didn't want to sell. Piggott would do all that. On being asked if the Spirr Wood went with the property, he said: "Of course, and all the fields to Tibb's Cross." He was wearied by this time, and referred him again to Piggott.

On this, Frampton said, that he hoped he would soon be better. The daughter came with him to the door, and directed him to Stubbington, where Piggott's office lay alongside the Abbey gates. It was under six miles, she said, by the road to the right there. He could see her watching him with her shrewd, hard eye, to try to discover if he were thinking of buying. Several people must have come there, he thought, and given her hopes, but then had gone and never made a sign.

"Of course," he said to himself, "the place is mortgaged to the hilt, and when the mortgage is paid off, they'll have possibly fifty pounds a year to live upon."

He looked back as he went up the rise to the car, and saw her looking after him, with a strange look of anger, hope and despair.

"It's a bad job for a woman," he muttered, "to be all tangled up and annulled by a man like that. She ought to have been married and bred from."

He found his father wrapped up in a rug, sitting inside the car.

"Well, Fram," the old man said, "Margaret tells me that you've lost your heart at last. Is it as lovely as she says?"

"Oh yes," Frampton said. "It's good enough to bargain for. I want to go back by Stubbington to find out what the snags are. What have you been finding?"

"All sorts of wonders," Margaret said.

"I did a bit of rummaging," the old man explained. "You can see that there has been a chapel there. I probed about with my little spud, and found an old tile or two; see here. These are from the tile-works beyond Stanchester, brought down the river by barge and then packed across to this place. Fourteenth-century Stanchester tiles."

He pulled up from the floor of the car some parts of broken,

reddish tiles, each with a bit of some simple yellow design in the middle, a rose, a lily, a cross or a crown.

"I washed them in the spring," he explained. "In an out-of-the-way place like this, the site didn't get pillaged like most of them."

"They would have had the priority to pillage, so much nearer the road," Frampton said.

"Well, I've had a happy day, routing about," his father said. "Now we'll get along to Stubbington, and then home to tea."

He did not speak for the next few miles; then said quietly:

"I suppose Rolly Marcham will have the job of doing it up?"

"I haven't got it yet," his son answered.

The old man laughed. "He says he hasn't got it yet, Margaret," he repeated. "If you hadn't determined to get it, you would not have stayed there all this time. Besides, I knew you wouldn't resist the water."

"What do you know about the water?" Frampton said. "You never saw it."

"It's all marked on the map," the old man said. "As I get older, I have to read maps instead of going to places. It's a lovely valley, I suppose. Margaret says there are curlews."

"All sorts of birds," he said.

"I suppose it might be a bit rheumatically, with all this water," the father said.

"Oh no," he answered. "Water will run wherever you lead it. You could carry all the water away, easily enough. As soon as she saw it, I knew that Peggy's heart was saying what George the Third said to the dumpling?"

"What did he say?" the old man asked.

"That's the jockey for me," his son said, "or so the history books tell me."

"I did say something of the sort, perhaps," Margaret said,

"but as a practical housekeeper, I did a little wonder about stores, the post and the plumber."

"And a doctor for the old father-in-law," the old man said.

"As for stores," Frampton said, "there are cars and vans and lorries. The post will come twice a day, and will carry mails away, if asked. As for plumbing, I have a man, Joe, who can do any sort of plumbing, right on the premises. As for a doctor, you'll be so well you won't need a doctor here."

They talked thus for a few minutes, till they were in the Market Square of Stubbington; outside the severe brick Tudor gate-house of Stubbington Abbey. There on a brass plate was the name of PIGGOTT.

"I dare say, I won't be long," he said, as he left the car.

"Fram never yet was long in making up his mind or doing what he had decided," his old father said. "He would make a good dictator."

In a few minutes, Frampton came out again, climbed into the car and drove them away.

"Have you plunged, Fram?" his father asked.

"I think I've got it," he said. "Nobody else is after it. I'm just going to telephone from the post office, to get my law chaps on to it."

He stopped the car at the post office, and telephoned to London, giving his instructions, that the firm was to get busy about it.

"Sorry to keep you," he said, "but I've set things going now, from both ends, so let us talk of the improvements."

This was a pleasant occupation to them till they reached the old man's old, beautiful house not far from Newbury. They were staying there for the next two nights.

Margaret came down before the others, to find tea ready, and the curtains drawn. She looked at the family portraits

on the wall; there were but two, of Frampton's grandparents, both by the famous painter, John Naunton. The grandmother had been painted from life, in old age; the grandfather from three old photographs. The old man came into the room and found her looking at them.

"Looking at the ancestors?" he asked. "Well, those are the only ancestors we have; but no man could ask for better. They were good souls, my dear. Thank God, I was able to look after them when they were old; not that Father was ever old. But we aren't exactly from the top drawer, my dear; just the ordinary."

"You needn't tell me that you and Frampton are ordinary," she said.

"Not when we are getting at our particular things," he said. "No, we're both clever in our ways, Fram and I; but apart from those times we're fairly usual, and had better not presume. We're ordinary folk. I don't mind. I don't even mind the people who do mind; formerly I did."

"And you think that the man who discovered Cornine is ordinary, do you?" she said. "You'll make me talk like a bolshie, if you say things like that."

"I think a good deal at odd times about this point, Margaret," he said, "and as the English race is deeply concerned with it, it's one we all have to think about. We have an instinct for aristocracy. I don't say that we have the thing, but we have the instinct for the thing. Deep down, the Englishman knows that he has no real esteem for discoverers and inventors, like Fram and myself. He wants somebody much more varied, much better bred, used to leisure, generously brought up, able in all sorts of affairs, skilled and bright and beautiful. But the discoverer and inventor, no. As a matter of fact, the world doesn't need discoveries; it doesn't know how

to use discovery; it abuses every discovery. What the world cries out for is not the ordinary, such as Fram and myself, but the extraordinary, who will lift the conception of life, government and nationality, which are all so low all over the world. In their blind, groping way, the English feel that, and therefore give enormous chances to the leisured people among whom such a spirit may emerge. He may never emerge. I sometimes think he won't. But I do think that our best sort of gentleman (a very different being from the usual sort) is the best extant attempt at what the world really needs."

Frampton came into the room, looking strangely handsome as he always did, when excited by work.

"Aha, my Peggy," he called. He crossed the room, caught her by both hands and swung her round. "I've got little Rolly Marcham coming to-night," he said. "I've got a large-scale map of the place; my photos will come out from Stubbington; and here are some of my little sketches. We'll go over the plans together, my Peggy, with Marcham, and then to-morrow we'll go to the house again, he and I, if you'd rather not come, so that he can be ready to get busy as soon as the lawyers are fixed."

"You've not wasted much time," she said. "Here's your tea."

"It's a foul sort of poison, tea," he said. "It came in with good taste; it spread with the public school."

"It came in and spread to make men fit for the society of ladies after dinner," she retorted. "Till tea came in, you lay below the tables till next morning."

"One thing about this *Mullples*, Fram," the old man said: "it's farther from London and the Works than anything you've been accustomed to, and these country telephones aren't always what perhaps the Postmaster-General hopes they may be before his successor dies."

"I think we can fix that," Frampton said.

"Well, there's another thing, which probably won't weigh with you. You may find your neighbours rather stuck in the last century, if not in the century before. There's been a great drain away from the country: even since I was a boy, men of character and brain have been flying from it, and what remains may be very much sediment. It's a pity, but it is so."

"One can get friends from all over the place," Frampton said. "The car has made a world of difference. Besides, Stubbington is a considerable place, and Tatchester isn't far."

"You'll have friends enough, and you'll have the Works," the old man went on. "But I'm thinking of the loneliness for the maids, and for your wife. I noticed a good many pheasants as we came along; and most of the inns were called 'The Horse and Groom' or 'The Fox and Hounds.' It's what is called a sporting district. Here's the leaflet of Piggott, the agent. He says: 'This well-known residential country offers sport with three packs of hounds.' I imagine, that if you don't hunt or shoot, and I haven't noticed any signs of either in you, you won't find many friends among your neighbours. You won't mind, but there'll be others."

"Meaning me?" Margaret cried. "But I shall have music and the garden and all sorts of reading to do. The clergyman will call, and the local syndicate of married women will send somebody to see and report. Who knows? She may like me."

"Now you come along, Peggy," Frampton said, "and look at these plans. This is the kind of thing I want to do."

They went through the plans together. Margaret made suggestions; the old man left them to it. After dinner, little Rolly Marcham was announced. He was somewhat like a robin in build and brightness. He had a strange way of hopping on to a chair when excited by something beautiful.

He was a lover of the arts, but was one of those who felt that art began in England in 1660, with the restoration of Charles the Second. He was a fine architect. He had done all the alterations to the house in which the Mansells were. He had caught the express, on hearing from Frampton.

"I'm glad you've come, Marcham," Frampton said. "I hope it wasn't inconvenient?"

"Not in the least. Delighted," Marcham said. It had been very inconvenient; he had had to break an evening's engagement with his fiancée, and sacrifice his theatre tickets; his fiancée was not well pleased with him.

"D'you know *Mullples Priory*?" Frampton asked.

"It was in Tatshire, a Benedictine House," Marcham said; he knew this kind of thing. "There's nothing left of the priory, is there?"

"No."

"I thought not," Marcham said. "I'd have seen it, if there had been."

Frampton rang the bell. When the maid came, he asked:

"Did a roll of papers come from the station for me?"

"They've just come, sir," the maid said.

"Those are the large-scale plans," he said. "I telephoned to London for them to be put on the express and sent on: that's a good service. Come along then, Marcham, and we'll have some coffee and I'll show you the idea." As he led the way out of the room, he said: "The people who got the priory at the suppression built a manor. That's the main problem now."

He led the way to the study next door which he shared with his father. It was a long, low room, with two big oak tables, one for himself, one for his father. Both the long walls were covered with book-shelves. Above these was a frieze in raised

relief, coloured proper, representing fallow deer, in covert, and in the open, resting, moving, grazing or running. It was a work of great spirit, done by a young man in whose work and future he had believed. The only other work of art in the room was a bronze head of his father, a powerful thing, but impossible as a likeness.

He took a chair at his table, and opened a packet of photographs just in from the local photographers, opened the plans, rolled them flat, and plucked a chair to his side for Marcham.

"Sit ye down," he said; "and now look here. This is the place; first appearance of the landed gentry. Monks out, gents in. Here are the photos; took them myself to-day. The chap who got it, pulled down the church and built himself a pretty nice house from it. It's all gone galley-west with neglect. This is the Tudor bit: like it? What d'ye say to the porch? Make you hop?"

It had made him hop; he was hopping all round the room, with little cries of "Golly."

Frampton continued. "Are you doing anything to-morrow? Got a meeting with Roger? Well, I want you to put him off and come with me. We'll go over it all and see what can be done. What d'ye think of the place? Like it, hey?"

"Golly," Marcham said, "I didn't know there was anything like this at Mullples. It isn't figured in Perkins? What's the roof like?"

"None too good, I expect. Perkins never got as far west as Mullples; he never touched Stubbington Hundred. I've just looked."

Marcham was a man of great reading in his profession and had a memory.

"Wait a minute, now," he said. "*Mullples Manor*. I do

know something about it. There's a theatre or something of that sort in the garden. A man wrote a letter about it to the *Architectural*, and said he couldn't get in to see it."

"That's the place. The theatre stands. This is the snap of it."

"That's a beautiful place. Is the roof of that gone?"

"No. It's dry as a bone. It's been a kennels and then a fowlhouse. You have to keep your hounds and poultry dry."

Marcham took photograph after photograph and seemed to eat them with his eyes.

"Well, what d'ye think?" Frampton asked. "Don't be so damned critical."

"Critical? I like that. You fill me with fizz and ask me why I'm sober. But these photographs look as though it needed seeing to. What's it really like? Falling down?"

"It's none too good, anywhere," Frampton said. "The brook's in the cellar, by the sound of it. No, they've let the place go to wreck."

"But why did they let it get into this state? They could have sold it."

"I expect they were always stupid and proud," Frampton said. "The hounds were the important thing to them, not the house. Lately, I should think he's clung on to it from sheer funk, of having nowhere to go, if he gets out of it. It's mortgaged, and if the thing's sold he won't get much more than will pay the charge."

"What will happen to him? The workhouse?"

"Well, what else is a chap like that good for? He can't work with his hands and hasn't any head; he's just human scrap, with a poor, sour devil of a daughter. But come on, now; fall to. This is my idea of what ought to be done."

He settled on to the plans as a bloodhound on to the trail; he was clear and forceful; and drove his enthusiasm into

Marcham's mind. Marcham was soon hopping about the room crying: "Golly; I see exactly what to do there. Now, how would this be?" Then he would rapidly sketch his suggestion, and give an estimate of the cost. He had a quick eye for a map, and saw from the big scale map all sorts of things which might be done. He also had a shrewd sense of the numbers of people needed to run the house and gardens, and where and how to house them.

"When will you know that you've got the house?" he asked at length.

"As soon as I can wring it out of them."

"Will you get vacant possession by Christmas?"

"I mean to try. The chap will need some booting probably which I don't mind if he gets."

"Say you get the house clear at Christmas," Marcham said, "that will mean work in the winter; short days and very likely frost. When do you want to be moving in?"

"I want to be married in July," he said, "and I want the house to be finished and in apple-pie order before then, with all the men out to hell from it, and none of your little messes in the flowerbeds. You'll have to get treble shifts on to it, but you'll get it done."

Marcham did not relish being bullied. He was thinking, that *Mullples* was a long way from any centre; men and gear would have to travel far to get to it. The nearest station was twelve, or more miles away. It would be a costly matter putting *Mullples* in order. Still, that was Mansell's look-out: he was rich enough. He knew his patron well enough to know, that any suggestion of difficulty would lose him the job, which was attractive to him. He knew, too, exactly how to put Mansell into good humour.

"Who have you got in mind for the walls?" he asked.

"Who says I'm going to decorate the walls?" Frampton asked.

"I know you won't have them bare," Marcham said, "so the sooner we can get the big rooms ready for the painters the better. How many frescoes have you in mind?"

"The big room, the dining-room, my study and my bedroom: four. I've been on the telephone about them. I'll get the measures with you to-morrow and get them to get on with the cartoons."

"Fine," Marcham said. "I see this map marks a chapel here. Is that anything?"

"No; but it's on the property and it'll need tidying up. A few bits of wall are above ground."

"Will you have all the water rights? Can you do what you like with the brooks?"

"Yes; and with the lake and with the springs. Oh . . . and then, here in this covert I want a watcher's cottage. I mean to make this a bird sanctuary."

"Spirr Wood; good name; fine," Marcham said. "I'll just make a note of that. A red brick bungalow idea, made to look sylvan."

"That's the idea," Frampton said.

"Any sheds or outhouses or so?" Marcham asked. "But we can go into that on the spot. Fine. I say, I do hope that the roof's pretty good."

"I think the whole house is pretty bad," Frampton said.

"Well then, I tell you what," Marcham said, "I do hope it won't rain to-morrow. If there is one sound I hate, it's rain falling into a fine old house."

"It won't rain to-morrow," Frampton said. "The glass is rising. It is going to be a lovely day to-morrow. And now, what d'ye say to a pot of hot grog and to bed. I'm going to

rout you out of here at eight to-morrow. You'll be called at six-thirty."

At eight the next morning, just as the beauty of the day was beginning to show, they were off and away to *Mullples*, to infuriate the sick man, by their insistence on getting at parts of the roof that he didn't know the way to, and angering the daughter by their laying of sacrilegious measures on the walls. She had not been used to energetic men, during her life on earth, and the sight of two was, therefore, the more revolting.

Marcham, when fired, was a man of the utmost keenness. The sight of *Mullples* was more than enough to fire him.

"By Jove. My Golly," he kept crying, "what a place. And I'd never heard of it. Except just the mention of the theatre. By Jove. My good Golly. I do hope you'll get this place. Golly, look at that front; and then the details. O, my Jove and Golly."

Of course, Frampton got the place. Margaret felt for the fall of the Knares-Yocksirs. She pleaded for gentle treatment for them.

"Fram," she said, "I've been worrying about the Knares-Yocksirs. They'll have very little to live upon when their house has gone and their debts on it are paid. All that they have will hardly bring them fifty pounds a year, between them."

"I know it," he said, "and they're not worth fifty pounds a year, between them."

"Yes, they are, Fram," she said. "Everybody is."

"I deny that," he said. "But go on, my Peggy. D'you want me to find him a job in the gun works? I won't, nor the woman; they're unemployable."

"No, no; they're not. She was born to some position in the county, but she has accustomed herself to a good deal, to cook,

and run the house, and be a nurse, and so forth; she's proved herself."

"I hate that kind of woman," he said. "She's no use to anyone, and is sour with it."

"Now, Fram," she said, "we are going to be wonderfully happy; might not some little share of our happiness come to them?"

"You mean, I might build them a lodge, and take them on as keeper and house-keeper? I wouldn't have them within extreme long range. I look on them both as duds. They were begotten by duds, the pair of them, and now our civilisation is slowly putting them out of action, as the duds they are."

"Fram, I'm very sorry for them and should not care to live in *Mullples* thinking that those two are turned out to misery. Will you, to please me, let them have the cottage at Cullingdon, if they would like it, rent free, until the father dies, at any rate? Then perhaps, she might do something for herself."

He did not relish doing anything for people of whom he disapproved, even for Margaret. The cottage at Cullingdon was a week-end cottage used by him in the summer when busily employed at the Works. It was a pleasant place, made of two improved cottages, knocked into one; it stood in a little apple orchard about half a mile from the village. He had hardly used it for the past two years; all his spare time had been given to travelling.

"Do, do this, to please me, Fram," she pleaded. "You said you weren't doing anything with Cullingdon."

"Very well," he said, not very graciously. "They can go to Cullingdon when they quit *Mullples*. I'll get my books and things out. They can move in at Christmas, or before."

"Oh, thank you, Fram," she said. "I can't tell you how happy that makes me."

"I don't think for a moment," he said, "that they'll like taking a favour from me, so will you go and offer them Cullingdon?"

"Let us do it together, Fram," she said. "Let's go over to-morrow and offer it to them; and then, mayn't we help them over the move? for they are as nearly ruined as two souls can be, and what they spend in moving will have to be paid for out of their food, and I can't bear the thought of it."

He could have borne the thought of it very well, but Margaret was very gentle and winning; in his rough way he was very fond of her; he was going to be married, and he was in a good mood at getting *Mullples* at a bargain. Her gentle counsel prevailed. When the purchase of *Mullples* was sure, he went with her to see the Knares-Yocksirs, and offered more than she had hoped, or would have asked. When he had resolved upon a thing, he always did it well. Margaret was much pleased at the way he offered Cullingdon. They were in the sick man's room at *Mullples*. Frampton, speaking to father and daughter together, said:

"I don't know whether what I have to say will interest you. I have a place in Essex, called Cullingdon. It is this place in these photographs. We were wondering whether you would like to come over with us to look at it? If you like it, when you have seen it, we wonder whether you would care to stay there for a time, till you find something better; it needs some keeping up, but not much, and if you would do that for us, you would have to let us pay you some small sum. It is easy to get stores there, and the garden is very fruitful. Of course, if you liked the idea, we should undertake the getting you there and settling you in."

He felt, in his own phrase, that he had done them proud, and expected a recognition of the fact, which did not

come. He found the father obtuse and inclined to boggle.

"I see," he said, "you keep to your one idea, of getting us out of this."

The daughter said nothing, but looked at him in a peculiar way, as though she would like to cut his throat.

"Well, turn it over in your minds," he said. "I must just get the measure of the room at the end."

He went out into the garden, fuming. He walked up and down, saying he had cast pearls, and the swine had trodden them. But as they drove away, when he burst out against the couple, Margaret told him, that the woman had broken down, and been quite unable to thank him.

"She said that she had not known where to turn nor what to do. She had no relations and, of course, no friends, and now this plan was just salvation."

She herself was weeping as she spoke. "Fram," she said, "I do thank you for saving these people. I couldn't have borne to live at *Mullples*, knowing that we had turned them out."

"It's up to them now," he said. "I've done what I can for them. But my belief is, that when a chap or a family starts to go down, it's a lot better to let 'em go. If I ever get into the feckless state that chap's got into, I hope you'll store me in the petrol cellar and give me plenty of matches."

"I'll make a note of that," she said. "But you don't know how you've pleased me."

Before Christmas Day, the couple were out of *Mullples*, and in charge at Cullingdon.

On the day on which they gave up *Mullples*, Frampton took Margaret to the old house and walked over it with her. A cricket chirped by the not quite dead fire, in which, as they could see, a lot of old papers had been burned. One half-burned sheet of notepaper had fallen from the grate. It was

dated the 7th July, 1852, from Something—wick Castle. The family had been prosperous then.

"This is to be our home," Frampton said. "I hope I may make it a happy one for you, my Peggy."

"I've no doubt you will," she said.

"It'll be the first real home I shall have had," he said. "A bachelor's dens don't count. Now, I want to tell you my ideas, and what I'm doing by you. You know my views, that I don't believe this bunk about artistic times. All times might be times of art. The talents in races don't vary; only some decades use the talents, others neglect or thwart them, or just crush them and misuse them, as the fashion is to-day. Most modern houses just make me sick; they're either plundered junk stores or the work of fakirs.

"Formerly houses had the marks of slow accretion about them; you could see the growth of the family in them, each generation adding something. There aren't many like that now. Anyhow, I don't belong to such a family. You know about us. I make no bones about it. We were on the ground, broke to the wide, in my own father's young days, as you know.

"I've hopes, that this home will be a stable one for us. I'm founding my hopes on that. All this time is restless and shifting; it's the only time that has been able to be restless; people can shift about and live away from their work. I know hardly anybody who is in the home he was born in. I want this place to be me, not anybody else, and my offering to you. I've designed every stick that's coming into it for you. I've designed carpets, curtains, chintzes, the furniture, the metal-work, the china, the glass, everything; or gone over every design and approved it; and every stick and thread and cup and pot and pan will be made by men known to me; and if

you don't like any of 'em, why, you need only say the word and they'll make 'em new, till they make something you do like. We're alive, and we'll have the work of life about us; not the death from the London junk stores, thank you. When we get home, you shall see some of the things, and I think you'll agree with me, that you're getting a better lot of gear than any young woman of your time."

Margaret understood him well. He was filling the house with images of his energy; his thought was to be all round her there; well, it was living and clear thought. She hoped that she might presently touch it with gentleness.

Going out into the winter day, a horn blew not far from them; a clear voice cheered and cheered. They saw the hounds passing up the valley, and a blowzy and muddy company following after them.

"I do believe they've been running through the shrubberies there," Frampton said, "trying for a fox just up by the summer-house. I'll soon stop that little game."

For the moment, however, he did nothing to stop their little game. He would do that presently, when some of the more pressing things were done. He saw the hounds go up the valley; and later followed on their tracks. They were all on his land, though they left it just beyond the water.

As he had not examined that end of his property with any care, he went on over it. It was a good big stretch of very poor soil. To the left of the water, the ground rose into a biggish, barren hill, wooded on the *Mullples* side with stunted and sickly trees, all jungled with bramble and blackthorn. A lot of this hill was of the starved, sickly colour of the Waste; it grew only a kind of grass so poor that it would hardly keep a goat. The wood upon it looked as though nothing entered it, ever. It went straggling down the slopes to more barren

pasture, then there came the road, and beyond the road was Spirr. It was clear that the road was the dividing line. To the west of it, things grew fairly well, to the east of it was the Waste.

"It's a case of denudation, I'll bet," he said. "The rains have washed out the life-giving things in the soil on this side and brought them all away down the hill. Well, in time, I may be able to help matters."

He was shocked at the tumbledown, bankrupt look of everything.

"The first thing to do," he said to Margaret later, "is to show that we don't despair of this Waste. It has been told for five generations or so that it is only fit for fox-hunting. The poor soil has come to believe it. Wait a while. We'll get the hunting off it, and life of a sort on to it. Lupins are said to be the things, but I'll find out that. Then we'll clear the jungle and let in the light, and do a bit of surgery or so. The drains must be cleared, too; half the hill is poisoned by retained rains. What this place has lacked has been work and the benefit of a mind upon it."

Now that the property was his, he gave it work and the benefit of his mind upon it. He set to, like a new broom. He was busy at the time with ideas for a new machine, which he called "The Death Spray," or "Mullples Multiple Murderer." But this absorbed him only during working hours; all the rest of his time, except that doled out to Margaret, was given to *Mullples* and the driving of the artists, craftsmen and workmen employed upon it. But before this began, he did something which had its effect upon his future there.

Before the old owners left, he had arranged with them that a firm at Stubbington should be allowed to send men over to clear the jungle and ruin from the premises, so that his own

architect's men might find a cleared field when they arrived. He saw the firm at Stubbington, and though he did not like their looks, still thought that they would be likely to do this work well, in the hope of future favours. It was suggested that they should send their men over to *Mullples* every day in a lorry and clear the place. He said that the work was to be pressed: the ground had to be clear by the week before Christmas. The manager assured him that the work should be pressed relentlessly.

"Believe me, sir, we'll have everything off the ground in the time allowed."

He did not believe him; he summed him up as one of those country contractors who flourish from the absence of rivals.

"I'll see how you get along," he said, "at a preliminary bit, before you get the contract for the rest. If you want the contract, you'll have to work for it."

He set the preliminary bit. The Manager, thinking that he would make him pay later for his insolence, accepted. He would soon show this London gent that in the Stubbington area you had to employ the one firm or go without. He meant to make Mansell sing small, before he had done with him.

In the afternoon of the day after which work was to be begun there, Frampton came down unexpectedly, and found nothing even begun, except that the workmen had started to build a small camp for themselves. He found the foreman smoking a cigarette and fishing in the lake. Frampton said that he hoped he was enjoying himself, and asked, what he thought he was doing and what his firm had done the day before. The Manager came up at this moment, rather hot from a run. The Manager said that they had to bring their men and stuff a long way, and until it was there, they could do nothing.

"That's about the thing you're best at," Frampton said. "This is what you call 'pressing things on relentlessly.'"

"I didn't know you was in such a hurry," the Manager said, "or I'd have hurried them on."

"You're quite incapable of hurrying things on," Frampton said. "You knew my views, and this is how you put them in practice. You're a set of slackers."

"I'm sorry you should speak like that, Mr. Mansell," the man replied, "but perhaps local workmen aren't good enough for you."

"If you're a specimen of the local workman," Frampton said, "let me tell you that you aren't good enough, nor anything like it. Selling matches on the kerb is your job. Pack your traps and your firm's traps, and be out of it."

The firm did as they were bid. The foreman did so; some of the men had heard the dispute; they looked with anger at this new-comer from London, who made guns and wanted to drive them like slaves. In Stubbington they started a legend, which was soon to grow, that this Mr. Mansell was in such a hurry, that Stubbington men weren't good enough for him. The Manager added his own comment, that he had his pride to consider, and would rather lose any work; he had been used to working for gentlemen. Mansell got them all out of it, and covenanted with the London firm, who had done the Works for him. A force of these men came down, with one of those portable camps of Mansell's own devising, which had been such a boon during the War. They camped on the spot and got busy. The outraged local Manager wrote to a friend in London, who wrote to the Press.

The letter said that the desecration of ancient buildings now going on all over the country was not sparing even such well-known examples of Tudor domestic architecture as *Mullples*

Priory in Tatshire. Lover of Old England asked whether the Anti-Vandal Society could not do something to preserve its beauties from the ruthless "Restoration" about to be put in hand there.

"Already London workmen are encamped, who may, of course, be presumed to be sympathetic to the work of the countryside, and the present owner has been heard to say that if there be one thing he loathes about a place it is 'Ye Olde'."

Rolly, the architect, saw the letter and showed it to Frampton, who replied to it. He said that until Christmas, the house would not be his, and that all that was being done to the *Mullples* estate at present was a clearing up. Some sycamores and elders were being cut, a tangle of thorns and jungle cleared, the choked ponds dredged, and the streams re-banked and their channels refaced. That after a half-century of neglect, the house would be overhauled thoroughly, and that Lover of Old England might have done better to write about it when the theatre was a fowl-house and the brook was running into the cellar. In fact, Lover of Old England and the Anti-Vandal Society ought to buy a little nest in Hogarth's Gin Alley and stay there.

The outraged manager took the letter to heart and treasured it. He was a man of some little importance in local affairs. Through him, as one of the first in the district to meet Mansell, the Mansell idea began to form in the local mind.

"Mr. Mansell, the famous gun-man, who is going to do up *Mullples*, is quite impossibly rude to people. He says that no one in Stubbington is fit to touch the house he intends to live in."

Presently, it took the form:

"He may be rich and he may be clever, but if he goes on as he's begun, nobody will touch him with a barge-pole."

On the day after Boxing Day, Frampton's men took charge of *Mullples* and Roly-Poly began the work on the house. It was the biggest and most delightful task he had ever had; he put his heart into it. Frampton spent every moment which he could spare from his Death-Spray and Margaret, at *Mullples*, urging on the work.

"I'll be the death of you, Roly-Poly," he said, "if you don't drive these chaps while the weather's open."

The weather that winter was open; the work could be pushed. Except for a part at the western end, the house was "not too bad, considering," Roly-Poly said.

Frampton was at his best in a scene of this sort. He loved work and the direction of any kind of energy. He was at *Mullples* at all hours, bearing a hand with any job which took his fancy, and trying his own way at it, hoping to make it simpler. He had a fondness for all tradition of work, judging it to be a memory, however defective, of the methods of genius. He tried to lay bricks, and to do tiling. He dug with the best of them, and planed against the carpenters, to see who could cut the longest shaving. Always, when he could, he talked with the men, and tried to find out from them who had taught them their ways of working. Somewhere in the far past there had been wonderful fellows in all the crafts; odd ghosts of their methods still flitted. He heard only of men long since gone, Old Joe This, and poor Mr. Tom That, who had learned from men who had worked under Hawkesmoor, who had learned from men who worked under Wren, who had learned from old tother who had done some of the plastering at None-such, who had learned from someone shadowy indeed, who had learned from the great unknown. But somewhere, genius had been bright in all the crafts, and the glimmer still showed.

It was necessary now and then to try to get work done at

Stubbington and in Tatchester. When this happened, it was his fortune to fall foul of the country method, which was, perhaps, just the leisured method of genius, which he longed to recover. In his impatience he declared publicly, and the words were repeated "with advantages," that the country workers were the sediment left, when all the guts had gone to the Colonies and all the brains to the towns. In the pubs at Stubbington, the labouring men summed him up as a slave-driver, who had a lot of chaps putting painted plaster on the walls, and spending pots of money on it, but that with it all, he'd no great cause to talk to them like that: his own father was only a baker's boy, and his grandfather had been in Tatchester prison. He'd no cause to sing proud with that in his record. Let a man with a grandfather in prison not talk too loud about his place in the world, however much money he might have.

He had now set the lower and the lower middle-class against him; very soon, he was to shoot at higher game and rouse a prouder hatred.

But, in the meantime, the work engrossed and delighted him. One of the pleasantest parts of the work was exploring the nooks and crannies of *Mullples* with Roly-Poly. They went up to the attics and got at the roofs; they groped in the cellars, tapped at old walls, broke off old plaster, laid bare fire-places and powdering chambers, rafters with splendid chamfers cut on them, done by some sure hand with an adze, in the one stroke, and hinges forged by the smith during the Wars of the Roses. But like Roly-Poly, he was less in love with these things, than with the later work. The theatre gave him the intensest thrill. There, under the stage, in a big store-room, so admirably built that it was dry as dust, were things which delighted him. There, behind the shards, the straw, the worn tools,

harness and other rubbish of a country house, was a stack of stuff laid edgewise. It looked, at first sight, like hurdling, but it proved to be scenery, much the worse for wear. It represented a classical park or woodland, of the time of Louis Seize; the sets were all of trees, or parts of temples. Pinned to some of the sets were papers which told what play they once had decorated. It was the play of *Zimotre the Terrible*, a play in verse, translated from the French of M. le Vicomte de Bellencourt, Ministre du Roi. On one of the slats was a programme, which gave the names of the players, but not the date, only the days of the week, "on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, at 3 p.m. precisely." On the floor were some written bits of parts, half a page of a Female Slave's part, and the song, in manuscript, to be sung by Master Nashe, "Alas, O tender Rapture."

Nothing more remained of the theatrical ambitions of that ancient lord of *Mullples*; local memory had forgotten him; the guide-books ignored him. Frampton searched for more in the British Museum and the public records. Surely, a man who cared for poetry and the other arts to this point must have left a mark on his time. What was the soul who produced *Zimotre the Terrible* in such a place?

Meanwhile, there was much to do at Spirr. He found, in Weston Mullples, an oldish man who was said to be very good indeed at fencing. Frampton wanted the outer fence of Spirr to be thoroughly repaired, cut, laid and ditched. He employed this old man among others to do this work.

Going out one day, in February, to see how the work was getting on, he found this man, on the western hedge, and stopped to talk with him. The work was excellent, for the man, Zine, was perhaps the greatest living master of fencing, then alive.

"That's beautiful fencing," Frampton said.

The old man knew that it was.

"There's not many can do it now, the old way, the way it ought to be done," he said.

"Who taught you to do it?" Frampton asked.

"Why, my father, sir," he said, "my father, who used to work at Sir Peter's, him and old Will, who was at the Rectory: good fencers both, at the trimming and laying. They didn't give prizes for un, then; no, it was a well-done job, then; no need to give prizes."

"How old are you?" Frampton asked, expecting to get some clue to the date when fencing was well done.

"I'm seventy-two, sir," the old man said. He worked on, for a time, then he said: "You see, there, sir, away yonder, the hill in like the blue? That's Wicked Hill, as they call it."

"Indeed."

"Yes, sir: Wicked Hill. They was hunting out that way, yesterday, from the *Fox Inn*, a matter of twelve mile. Are you a hunting man, sir?"

"No," Mansell said, "not in the least."

"Well, that's where they went yesterday," the old man said, "out Wicked Hill way; and two of their horses laid down and died."

"Did they kill their fox?" Frampton asked.

"No, sir," the old man said. "He got away on 'em, being artful. Very artful things are foxes, sir, as all the world knows. And a fox is better than a man at it, for he can be tired and artful, and a man can't, not when he's tired. That's why polices catch thieves and foxes get away."

"That's a very good point," Frampton said. "I've never heard it put before. And what killed the horses? Did they fall?"

"No, sir; I reckon they was just ridden till their hearts burst. It's a good galloping country, over 'twixt the *Fox* and the *Hill*."

He bent to his task, plainly cheered by the image of something excessive; then, seeing that Frampton wished to talk, he grounded his slasher, and straightened up, glad of an opportunity to pass on his experience.

"They don't see the hunts they used to see in the old days," he said; "there's a lot of reasons for that, the one being the ground, that is now got cleared of the water it used to hold. There is a deal less boggy land now, than in my father's time. That makes it hard for the foxes. The hounds can go now, fast, over what would 'a held 'em long ago. Then to my way, the foxes aren't the same kind; all the good 'uns got killed off in the mange years, as they call 'em, when all the foxes got mange; you'd see some of 'em with no more hair than on a baby. They got in a lot of new foxes, presently, on the sly, from Germany, somebody was saying, but they aren't like the old English sort, nor won't be, yet awhile; for you can't hurry Nature, that's sure; she's one that won't be hurried, not for anything that you can do."

"Do you hunt?" Frampton asked. "Were you ever a huntsman?"

"I? No," the old man said. "No, sir; but when I was a young man, I was a groom, or under-strapper, as they called 'em then, to Sir Peter Bynd, over yonder, at the great *Coombe House*. That was this present Sir Peter's father. He had the hounds then. And sometimes, when my luck was in, I rode second horseman, then; and sometimes I got more of a hunt of it than my master; till I had a fall and cracked my backbone into three. I've not rid a horse since then."

He turned again to his work.

"What is it that you liked in hunting?" Frampton asked. "Why do men hunt? They could gallop over the fields in winter, without harm, at any time, without going to all this expense. Why shouldn't they do that? Why should they torment poor foxes, and have all this swank and folly?"

The old man looked at him with some perplexity, as he might have looked at a foreigner whose tongue he did not well understand. He carefully leaned his curved slasher against the hedge, with an air of having done with work for a while.

"It's in man's nature to like sport, sir; they take to it naturally. And it gives a chance to every man to enjoy what he likes best. There's some are all for putting on fine clothes and riding a cock-horse, all shiny, lots of that kind, men and ladies; then, there's many likes riding, riding like the devil, three horses a day; then, some are all for watching the hunting of the hounds. There's not many cares for that but some will. My father was one of them. He'd be in the covert, if he could ever get near 'em, watching each hound. He used to say that he'd give all the riding ten times over just to watch that. He said hunting went out when riding came in. He said they don't hunt the fox at all now, they just run him off his legs. What he liked to see was the huntsman a part of the pack, in covert or out of it on one of these slow hunting days, when there's nothing but wafts of scent. But not many care for that now. A lot cares for hunting because others care for it, and because it puts life into a country-side, to see a lot of life in it. And it is a fine sight, on a moist morning."

"Don't you think you could get the fine sight in some other way?"

"Ah, you might," the old man admitted; "but then, you see, you don't."

He reflected on this, and on what other sights the countryside

offered, the parade of the Territorials once in every summer, the Flower Show at Tatchester in early August, the point-to-point meeting in April. No, it did not seem to him that there would be much to see in that part of the world, if hunting were put out of the scheme.

"No," the old man went on, "no. We've had hunting from time immortal, and I hope we always will have."

It is possible, that at this moment a suspicion crossed his mind that this with whom he spoke was a city gentleman. He had heard of such as people quite without any feeling for sport, and no knowledge of country things. He had even heard of such as sometimes inclined to write that hunting ought to be abolished.

"But," Frampton said, "we haven't had fox-hunting long. It is a recent sport; it was hardly known before the reign of Queen Anne. People killed foxes, but they didn't hunt them with hounds."

"No, sir?"

"No."

The old man resumed his slasher with a weary air.

"Ah, but hereabout they did, sir. This is Spirr Wood, where fox-hunting begun. The Fire of London begun, as I have heard say, sir, in one place, and fox-hunting begun at Spirr Wood. You may not have known, sir, that this is that Spirr Wood." Seeing that Frampton remained blank, and not liking such ignorance, he went on: "This is what they call the great Spirr Wood. You be a stranger in these parts, sir, if I may make so bold, and you will let me speak. There be a noble great song about this wood."

"I'm glad to hear it," Frampton said. "What sort of a song? Do you know it?"

"They call it the *Spirr Wood Song*," the man said. "Not

many of the people here remember it all now. It's a hunting song. My father sung the most of it."

"Will you sing it to me?"

"Ah, it's not so easy, to go back over a song like that one."

"Try. I'd like to hear it."

The man put down his slasher, with care, after first wiping the blade. He straightened himself with care, being somewhat cramped from stooping. For a moment he stood, staring now with much attention at Frampton, for he meant to paint his portrait, with much exactness, at his favourite bar that night. After this had filled his mind, he turned up his eyes, gulped, and went down into the recesses of his memory, after odds and ends of words not used for years, perhaps.

Presently he began unexpectedly with words which went at first both above and below the tune, till he got to something midway between.

"To Spirr Wood we came on the opening day,
The fair first of November, as I have heard say.
Tom Jerkin was there on his black horse, Magra,
And a hundred bold riders from near and from far."

"Tom Jerkin was the huntsman, sir; my father used to know him in his latter day, when he'd come down a bit; for he had fall, Tom did, and never rode another ride. He couldn't continue huntsman, not after the fall, so the gentlemen made him a cap, to set him up. But Tom spent it in a few weeks. Then, after that, he went about with the terriers and that, all he could, but it wasn't much of a living, after being a huntsman and getting crowns and sovereigns and that from every lord in the land, so he came down in the world, as pride does."

"How does the song go on, from there?"

"There comes a chorus, sir, there, what all are supposed to join in. It goes somehow. . . . There. . . . I do believe I've forgot the chorus. It goes with a bit of a cry, like it was the hounds joining in.

"Tally-ho . . . Tally-ho . . . may his bed be the clay
Who will not sing ho for the great Spirr Wood Day.'

No, that doesn't seem quite right to me. There was something came in before then about twice ten long miles."

"I take it, that it's a song about a fox-hunt?"

"Yes, like I'm singing it to you. It's a song about the Spirr Wood Day. It was a day about the first of November. They drew the covert here and found a fox. Some said he wasn't a fox and couldn't 'a been, but must have been a wolf got away from a circus, for the dance he led 'em, but Tom Jerkin, who talked to my father, and who was in the covert and saw the fox, and was away with the hounds over that field there, Tom, who'd a right to know, and saw the fox, he said it was a fox, and not a very big one, just a small dog-fox, with a bit out of his ear. He may 'a been little, but he was good; little and good, as a Welshman's cow, as we say."

"And then he went away?"

"Yes, of course he did. Like I'm trying to sing to you, if you wouldn't put me out of mind. And ever since then, the Tunster Hounds have drawn this cover the first day of the season, because in memory:

"To Spirr Wood we come on the opening day.'"

"They'll have to find some other covert," Frampton thought.
"They will open here no more." He spoke to the old man:

"But tell me," he said, "did they catch their fox on this day, whenever it was?"

He tried to judge, when the day had been. Zine was over seventy. He might have heard the song during the latest 'sixties, from a man who had heard it from Tom Jerkin, in the 'thirties, who might have learned it twenty years before.

"Tell me," Frampton said, "have you lived all your life at Weston Mullples?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, "all my life. I've not been much of a traveller, except once with the old Rector to a rose show in London. That would 'a been the year of the first Jubilee, in old Mr. Drew's time."

"Did you ever hear of Sir Jocelyn Petersbury?"

"No, sir."

"He lived at *Mullples*."

"No, sir; never. Mr. Knares-Yocksir lived in *Mullples*, and his fathers before him."

"This was the man who was there a hundred and fifty years ago, before the Knares-Yocksirs ever bought the place. He built a theatre and gave plays. Sir Jocelyn Petersbury."

"No, sir."

The local mind had remembered the fox-hunt, but not the giver of *Zimouire the Terrible*, at whose bidding Master Nashe had warbled "Alas, O tender Rapture."

"Tell me," Frampton said, "in this famous fox-hunt, did they kill the fox?"

"No, they didn't catch him," the man said. "He took 'em all up and down, all day long, and in the evening, he brought 'em all that was left, the three of 'em, back to this Spirr Wood, where they lost 'un. Lots of horses dropped dead, that day, ah, and Mr. Flaggon had his back twisted; he was never what you could call straight, after that, Mr. Flaggon."

"Where did Mr. Flaggon come from?"

"Mr. Flaggon? He was a London gentleman."

Frampton was not interested in the story of Spirr Wood, but was touched at this song being still in the old fellow's memory; it was the only trace of art in him, this relic of a bad ballad about a fox-hunt, with only three left in it at the end, lovely horses galloped to death, and Mr. Flaggon twisted for life. He stayed on talking to the old man, but not encouraging him to delve further into the epic of Spirr Wood, but asking to be shown something of the mystery of ditching. He was ever fond of trying to do country things. He held, that all art comes from the power that does rough work, and the pride and joy of doing that rough work well. All the diseases of art, and he knew them all pretty well and had seen their practitioners, seemed to him to proceed from that very point of weakness. The artists could not do the rough work, they therefore were not men of power, and their work was consequently weak and despondent, without pride and unable to give joy, seeing that itself did not proceed from joy.

He remained with the old man, doing a bit of ditching and a bit of hedging under his guidance, for a while, and then returned home, thinking of the might of men, who in the course of centuries had made the art of the countryside, so trim and beautiful, ditching the fields, planting, trimming and plashing the fences, carrying away the standing meres, getting the boggy patches dry, a work of centuries, always noble because it taxed a strong man to the utmost at all times, and never could be relaxed nor ended. In that particular bit of England, as he very clearly saw, the effort to get the water off the land must have been heroic. Traces of old drains were everywhere. At one time, they had cared for that land as a mother cares for a child. Then, indeed, men had cared for England.

Thinking over what the old man had said, he decided that it would be best to write to the Hunt Secretary, to make it clear that Spirr Wood was to be a bird sanctuary, and that he wished the hounds to avoid it. He wrote this letter, and sent it off, thinking:

"Well, sooner or later, these chaps will be turned out of every covert; they've had five generations of Spirr."

He had a busy week in the Works just after that and did not pay any attention to the plea of the Secretary, whose name seemed to be Bynd, that he would reconsider his decision. Taking the letter from his table by chance a few days later, he thought that he had better send a brief reply. He, therefore, wrote a formal line or two, to say that he was sorry that he could not reconsider his decision: Spirr was to be a sanctuary. Somebody told him a day or two later that a man of the name of Bynd had come up twice to *Mullples*, in the hope of seeing him. He did not pay any attention to this; did not, in fact, associate the name with the Hunt. *Mullples* was beset with tradesmen's touts at all times; he thought: "Oh, this will be the baker, or the candlestick-maker."

Afterwards it did occur to him: "Oh, it was the Hunt Secretary. Well, he has had his answer; and he must see, by this time, that I'm putting a warden's hut inside Spirr. He must take No for an answer. Why should he think that I'll give up a considered plan for a whim of a few fox-hunters? Margaret shall have her birds, and the Hunt may go chase itself."

By the end of April, the work of the house was well forward. The painters who were doing his frescoes were getting along well, and enjoying the chance to show their power. Each toiled there with his plasterer from dawn till dark, as happy as the day. There were four main designs; one, in the hall, of the year's work in the fields; one, in his library, of the

story of Tristan and Isolt; another, in Margaret's room, of the birds that haunt the water and watery places, herons, dippers, wild duck, moorhens, curlews, and the green plovers who cry from the marsh at night; and a fourth, in a big sitting-room, of the forest of England, with Robin Hood, his meyny, the deer and the wild things. The garden had been remade and planted. Enthusiasts were already coming out in cars from Stubbington, in the early mornings, to steal the plants.

In Spirr Wood, the "bungalow, made to look sylvan," looked as sylvan as so new a thing could. The builders had made something of a mess in getting it up, but the Spring was pushing fast over the traces. Timothy had moved in there as soon as one room of it was covered; he had passed some weeks already, with much enjoyment, getting up nesting-boxes of different kinds in the trees. He worked at the making and disguising of these all day long, with the skill and pleasure of genius. He had a carpenter's bench there; he was glad to be out of London and to have some excuse, not to work at his profession. He was a charming-looking lad of much sweetness and weakness. He made Frampton feel that he was, as he put it, "going to pull up his socks for good."

He had a delicate way of disguising his nest-boxes, which pleased Frampton very much.

"If you would only put some of that instinct into your bird drawings," he told him, "you would be as good as the best. Why do you try to draw a chaffinch as if it were a vulture? It isn't."

Timothy would look sullen, for he disliked Frampton and loathed his comments. Margaret would soothe his tender vanity.

On her birthday, early in May, Frampton gave a tea-party to Margaret and her friends inside the theatre, which had now

been well restored, with new decorations and seats in the auditorium. It looked charming. He made a little speech to his twenty guests from the stage.

"I am glad to welcome you to the *Mulples Theatre*," he said. "I have not yet finished my enquiries into its origin, but I have learned this about it: it was built by one Sir Jocelyn Petersbury, who bought this estate in 1769. The Petersburys were wealthy West Indian and Virginian traders; Sir Jocelyn was the last of them. As quite a young man, he gave up all the family businesses, bought this place and set out to make it beautiful. He was to some extent moved by the taste of the time, but more by a personal fondness for water, I mean the sight and the sound of water. All over the estate are pools of great beauty, with pleasant summer-houses from which the water could be contemplated, or the noise of the sluices heard. I have no doubt that this fondness for the sight and sound of water brought him here and inspired the lay-out of the property. This laying-out and so forth may have taken him a few years to finish. When he was not here, he was in London, and I think that an allusion in one of Gibbon's letters may be to him. He was a dilettante, a Voltairean, and anything and everything that was against the weight of the time. He wrote a pamphlet called *A Plea for Conscience Money*, a copy of which will be handed to each of you as you go. It calls on the statesmen of the time to give a tithe of what they steal from the nation to establish a Theatre of Taste, where the elegant may not be ashamed to be seen. It is a witty paper; I am glad to have been able to reprint it. He wrote a few copies of verses under his own name; these are all in couplets; a few specimens will suffice you probably. On Matilda going to the Bath is his happiest effort.

'What novel splendour lights the western skies?
Hesperus kindles from Matilda's eyes.'

One or two society newspapers seem to refer to him in lampoons as Sir Jestling Peter; but I cannot imagine what the lampoons mean. No doubt they refer to matters well known in his little clique. Boswell does not allude to him. A Voltairean would hardly have been welcomed by Dr. Johnson.

"I believe that he built this theatre and devoted it to the elegant French idea of art as a protest against the government's policy against France and the American colonies. He must have been a brave man, who put on a translation from the French here, in the days of Squire Western and so forth; but beyond all doubt, he did. Who came to the performance or performances I cannot tell. The local bucks would probably have been much puzzled. The one play which we know to have been performed here was *Zimmoire the Terrible*. The fashion of the theatre has turned away from that kind of thing, which was then much esteemed. It is a play in which the hero rants and the heroine pleads; finally the hero relents and is magnanimous, and the heroine says at great length that few things are so beautiful as virtue. *Zimmoire* is an Eastern potentate; Carbante, his prize of war, is about to be added to his harem; Leandre, her lover, follows her to the capital and plots to rescue her. They are captured as they fly and threatened with torture; Carbante pleads, and *Zimmoire* releases and pensions them. You will see from this that the plot offers good opportunities for both fierce and pathetic declamation. But it was, and was proclaimed to be, a translation from the French, when opinion was hostile to France and French things. One, therefore, concludes that Jestling Peter was a man of intellectual courage, or matchless insolence, according to your

political opinions. After this, Sir Jocelyn seems to have faded out; there are no more poems by him in the accustomed papers. I cannot find that he wrote any other thing. He never married. Matilda's eyes lighted some more favoured swain. I am inclined to think that his health broke down soon after 1777. He died in 1780, aged thirty-five, leaving no will; a cousin succeeded to the property. Local historians have not mentioned him, if we except Trott in 1822, who calls him the Eccentric Sir Jocelyn. Local guide-books mention the theatre. I am sorry that I cannot tell you more about him. I have little doubt that somewhere in England, perhaps not far from where we are, there is some portrait of him, perhaps by Reynolds, perhaps by Gainsborough, or perhaps by one of those lesser elegant painters, who had the favour and the patronage of the exclusives. If there were any such portrait, it was never engraved. I like to think that the elegant young man may have met the vehement young Blake and exchanged sympathies about intellectual liberty."

After the party, he talked with Margaret about Sir Jocelyn. She said:

"It is very curious, Fram, but all the time while you were speaking, I felt that Sir Jocelyn was here, very happy, that he should be remembered. I am so glad that you have restored the place as a theatre. He must have given very much choice thought and care to make it one; and it is so exquisite; the proportions are so charming. You wondered who came to the performances of *Zimouire*; don't you think that a rich eccentric, like this, who was called Jestling Peter, might give the play as a social duty, without caring, really, whether the people enjoyed it or not? He would enjoy giving it, and might have taken great pains with it. And I dare say a houseful of jesting friends, including Matilda, enjoyed watching the contortions

of Squire Western during the performance. And all the countryside would have enjoyed the bustle and stir of the carriages and costumes, and remembered the declamations, too, perhaps."

"This countryside would have been Puritan," he said. "They would have expected hell to open and swallow the whole lot up."

"That would have been part of the fun perhaps," she said, "to wait for them all to be damned."

"It must have been a puzzle to them," he said, "when nothing happened. But then, they always get out of that by saying that the ways of Providence are inscrutable. Now what d'ye think, my Peggy? Here we are with this theatre, a very lovely little building; just the very thing, as you notice, for a kennels or a fowl-house. What are we to do with it? I say, why not use it for lectures and picture-shows? There's lots of talent buried among these country workers; but what chance have they of seeing good modern work or decent design? None. None whatever. For instance, over in Stubbington, they've got a monumental mason, employing three or four men. I was talking to them the other day. They were quite clever fellows, but had never seen a decent modern sculpture in their lives. Think what it might be to those fellows, if they could come here and see a chap like old Tick demonstrating with clay or a block of marble. I vote we give shows of modern art here, and get a lot of good chaps in the different lines to come down and talk. I believe a whole lot of working people would be interested."

"I'm sure they would," she said. "Have you no thoughts of ever doing plays here?"

"Yes, but not for some time. I want to get a lot of young people into the way of coming here first, for discussion and to

see works of art. Then, when I've got the people, we can turn them onto that, if they seem inclined that way."

"It seems a pity not to use this charming little theatre for plays," she said; "but I do a little wonder where the audience would come from. We are far from any community."

"The motor has made all communities near," he said. "If you dangle a good bait, or dangle a bad bait cleverly, you'll get all the community you can manage. You'll find that we shall be a good bait, and the fish will rise."

They had walked out from the theatre into the open. It was a lovely May day; the plum and pear blossom was white in the orchards; some of the apple-trees were touched with bud. They looked at the men busy about the house, and listened to the noise of the work going forward, saws, hammers and the rush of planes. To the west was Spirr Wood, with its fir-trees like dark masts under sail. To the north, the low wooded hills stretched; a noise of rooks came from the rookery in one of the woods.

"What is that wood called?" she asked.

"It's a part of what is called Stubbington Great Wood," he said. "It belongs to a crusted old Tory called Colonel Purple Tittup. That's his name and that's his nature. He lives in a big house there; lots of land and no money, they say."

"It's a very beautiful wood," she said.

"I don't believe it really is," he said. "I was up there not long ago on a wall; it didn't look so well, near at hand. It's all on this Waste, as they call it, where nothing really does. 'Nothing'll grow on the Waste,' they say."

"Fram," she said, "do you really believe in a Waste? You were saying that art only fails from want of encouragement. Does not an estate only fail from the same cause? This Waste, as they call it, is only a stretch of land with some chemical

deficiencies. If you fed those chemicals to the land, things would do there. Don't you think it would be fun to try?"

"So you want me to buy that wood, too?" he said. "Well, wait a bit. That wood looked to me exactly like a modern city, all full of people and something wrong with the lot of them; not a tree wholesome, except perhaps some elders. Now I put it to you, does a doctor want to tackle an entire city when he first sets up in practice? In all those acres, I should have to feed chemicals of some sort to every tree."

"But, trees have grown on it," she said. "Trees have contrived to get a kind of life out of it; probably for centuries."

"Have they?" he answered. "Have they? Are you so sure? The place reeked to me of the act of a Government. First there came peace, when a government sold all the possible oak woods and starved the Navy; then there came war, when a government wanted oak wood for the Navy and said that England must be prepared against all emergencies. Then all the patriots offered all the plots that were worthless, and the Government bought them all at ten times their value, and promptly planted them with woods that would do worst on them. Presently, when the scare died down, and peace was piping, the Government sold all the plots back to the patriots, dirt cheap. That's what was done at Stubbington in the Napoleonic wars; don't tell me it wasn't."

None the less, he always thought of Margaret's suggestions, and soon came back to them. It would be fun to take on the Waste, bit by bit, and make it productive. It would be fun to remake Stubbington Great Wood, and pull down the old rotting barrack where Purple Tittup tittupped and was purple.

The summer, which had begun in April that year, continued with fair, dry weather for weeks together; the work at *Mullples* could be pushed on, both in and out of doors. It

was a happy time for Frampton. Whenever he could find the time, he would rush to *Mullples* to urge on the work and to put his own hands to some of the jobs. Many of the men at work there were the pick of their crafts; he had a great pleasure in working with these and learning the depth of their skill. When he left *Mullples*, he would whirl back to his father's house, see Margaret, and plan for the future. Then, in the morning, he would be back at his Works, where he was working out schemes for the instant increase of his plant, in case war should break out. He was also enjoying work upon his death-spray, or, as he now called it, his Death Rose. It was an ingenious, fatal and cheap machine-gun, for which he foresaw a great and grave-yard future. He loved to sit still, thinking of dodges by which this cobra among guns could be given more mouths and more fangs to each. He loved to devise advertisements for it:

“Mansell’s Deadly Death Rose”

A child can use it.

Invaluable to all Dictators

A Corpse for a Ha’penny.

“Look, Mother, a Graveyard full, for only 3/6d.”

“Foemen who flout Britannia’s blue, white, red,
By ‘Mansell’s Death Rose’ shall be swiftly dead.”

It was a happy summer for him; all his energies were in full play, making either beauty or ingenuity; all his life was focused and aimed. The end of July was to see the crowning of his life, when he would marry, and presently bring Margaret home to the beautiful place his love was making for her. As the summer drew on, with her beauty, and the hawthorn gave way to the dog-rose, and the corn-crake called, and the cry and

the flight of the swallows made the evenings marvellous, he felt, that he had made *Mullples* worthy of the beauty in which it stood. It was become again one of the beautiful houses of the land; "and when I say England," he added proudly, "I mean the world."

Presently, July came in with fair weather, intense heat and pressure to get the workmen out of *Mullples*. The pools in front of the house were now full of water. The garden was full of flowers; the house rang with songs and whistling as the last of the decorators and painters worked. By the 12th, the house was ready for him; the electricians had done; the engine was installed and running; the floors had all been scrubbed, and the screens removed from the frescoes. On the afternoon of the 15th, he walked with the artists about the empty rooms, looking at the work. The rooms looked a little raw in their bareness. The paintings looked a little startling in their newness; but he was pleased with them. As the light deepened into glow upon some of them, he felt the power of their design and knew that his four men had wrought four masterpieces for his new home in the wilds.

He was to be married in one week from that day. He had come to full maturity of manhood without wishing to be married; he had never met any woman before Margaret who drew him in the least. Margaret attracted him; he wanted her; he felt that his life would be completed by her. In his savage way, he wanted children and felt that she would be the mother for them. He could not say why he wanted children. He was not fond of them, when he met them, nor did they take to him. He tried to answer the question, why he wanted children, and found it hard to answer. He was fortunate in life, and knew that his children would have the advantage which fortune gives. He had not much faith in the future of

England and none whatever in the future of civilisation.

"So why," he asked himself, "should I, or anyone, want to bring helpless beings into the world where they may have the very devil of a beastly time? Just as I'm perfecting my Death Rose to blast to death half the sons of men, I'm going to take a wife and try to beget a few. If I succeed, I shall bring some unfortunates out of the unknown night of nothing to a world where they may curse me heartily for my reckless act. 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' the parents always say; but by Jove, the children say a different thing; unwanted virgins, poor devils in cells and mad-houses, down and outs on the benches, misfits, geniuses, and ninety-seven per cent of the normal as well, would a damn sight rather have been left blank. Not much wish among them to honour the senseless two who fetched them out of nothing to suffer and be sick."

Yet, even in his savagery, he felt, that children were living and that these thoughts of his were destructive of life.

"It may be," he thought, "that without children people become inhuman. Without children this place will be a pretty empty shell. I'd like my children to have what I planned and put good work into."

He was looking out over the valley in the sunset as he thought these thoughts. He turned to see the geese in Bill Caunter's great design behind him. He would like his son to have that evidence of his father's sense of decoration. And as he thought this, there floated into his brain the idea for a new gun, almost too bad to be true, which would make the Death Rose, lethal as it was, almost a health cure in comparison.

For a moment, the simplicity of it took his breath away. "There must be some snag," he thought. He sat down on the window seat and made some jottings on a pocket pad. No, the inspiration had spoken truth from a well of all truth; the

gun might be and could be. Whether it would be was another matter, for he knew what getting a gun adopted meant. He had been up against the pigs of lead of retardation and obstruction. No soldier would look at a gun of this sort.

"Why," he cried, "this will reduce the weight of a soldier's equipment by fifteen pounds, increase his deadliness perhaps five hundred fold, make an army unnecessary, and a staff an even greater pest than at present. This gun will make war a game *aux petits pois*; curates will play it; girls' schools will take to it instead of hand-ball. Make more men my children, Frampton's new muzzles 'll want meat."

He was filled with such joy by the new idea, that he ceased to think of Margaret, nor of the fact, that his things were coming in to the new home the next day. Presently, he remembered both these matters and drove home to telephone to Margaret and to talk to his housekeeper, Mrs. Haulover.

Mrs. Haulover was a lady of some distinction. She was the widow of an old etcher and art-critic, with whom Frampton had had some acquaintance that had almost been friendship. She was younger than Haulover by ten years, and was now perhaps sixty-five. She had at one time been a good copyist at the National Gallery, and still modelled figurines with talent. She had been left penniless by Haulover. Frampton had put her in charge of his establishments after explaining his ideas, and for nearly six years she had managed for him. What she thought of him, she never said; but sometimes she compressed her lips. On the one hand, she loved loyalty; and Frampton was loyal to old Haulover and had organised and made successful the memorial exhibition of old Haulover's prints. She made that excuse much. Frampton's ideas of servants revolted her; but she had learned from old Haulover, that a genius has his own ways and may sometimes make those ways extremely

effective in his own way by his own personality. Frampton chose his servants himself, and explained his methods to Mrs. Haulover, at one of their first interviews.

"I see their testimonials first, and they have to be good and written in a hand that shows character. I go to see the writers, if I feel that the person's testimony is any good at all. Then I see the applicant, and make up my mind about her. She has to be a good animal, first of all; she has to be strong and look cheerful and intelligent, but she has to be a good animal first; somebody you wouldn't mind breeding from. I won't have one of these flimsy minowderers, with a powdered nose and a mouth like a film girl. Then I ask her to write her name, and then I ask her if she can draw or has ever read a book. None of them yet has been able to draw, and only two of them had read a book; a real book, that is. Then, of course, she has to be clean and look distinguished; I'll not have one of these damned minowderers all cut after a pattern. Then I ask her what wages she wants, and tell her I'll give her from half to twice as much, if she will put her guts into it. I make it clear she won't get any damned nonsense from me and she'd better not try any of hers. I tell her, she'll have a wireless set, and a library subscription; that I expect her to go at my expense to a picture show or a concert or a theatre once a week. I contrive to send two of 'em together. And I make 'em talk of it to me next morning. They've got to do their job on the ticker, without any shinnannikin. I pay them myself, every Friday morning, and give them a talk each time on world affairs and expect them to talk to me. I don't get any rotters. I cut them out at the first interview; I get a good lot of workers, who stay a long time, and only leave to get married. It isn't my idea at all. It's my old father's idea. He's the wisest man I've ever met; and it was his system from the

first. He wanted to get a servant who would really share a lot of the best that life has with him. It is expensive, perhaps, in that you pay more than the market rate; but you get something that isn't to be had in the market, and never will be. Anyhow, that's my way, and it's going to be it."

That was that. It wasn't Mrs. Haulover's way, but as Frampton had the knack of making it work, she said no more, but helped him to apply it. She had the job of moving into *Mullples*, and wondered, as she moved in, how long the maids and men would be able to stand the quiet of the valley. Frampton had been kind to the maids in his very rough way. He had seen, that they understood the kind of life he was taking them to. They had all seen the new house and had a look at the neighbouring towns of Stubbington and Tatchester. He would not tempt them into a place they might loathe. He told them, that if they liked they could go to take lessons in country things, such as pruning and dairy work, before going down.

Mrs. Haulover was moved in by the night of the nineteenth, and telephoned through to Frampton that the house was ready for him to see, if he would care to come in to see it, the next day, with Miss Holtspur.

On the twentieth, therefore, two days before his wedding, he drove over to Holtspur, her old home in Berkshire, a few miles from Newbury, picked her up there, and then drove her to see the *Mullples*. It was a day of great beauty, fine, sunny and not too hot; the garden was not at its very best, perhaps, but there was a fair show of roses for so new a planting. The house was looking its best, all new and trim. She went all over the new home; she had not seen it since her birthday, as Frampton had wished to surprise her with it. She was enchanted with what he had done and proud indeed,

to know that he had done it for her. Some of the very young men who had been brought in almost as afterthoughts, to decorate the attics, had worked to the stretch of all their powers and done memorable work. She was much pleased by a rough, rude, powerful fresco by young Charles, done on the wall of an attic, representing a fence, of paling and thorn, with fern and flowers, and beasts looking over into the room.

"I love this," she said.

He was much pleased, for he had spotted Charles as a future winner and had given him his chance; he was now thinking of using him in a new scheme which was not yet set upon paper. He himself, was in a glow of joy that day.

Mrs. Haulover reported, that the maids had liked their new rooms, and had settled in. Helga and Charlotte saw him later and thanked him, and said, that they were sure they would be happy there. They welcomed Margaret and hoped that she, too, would be happy there. He had to settle some points about the household's attending his wedding. He was going to have caretakers in *Mullples* for a part of the day, so that all the staff might attend the wedding near Holtpsur; after the wedding, he and Margaret were going to fly to Sweden for their honeymoon.

They lunched together in the new dining-room; she liked the new things; furniture, china, glass and cutlery were all new; and the vegetables and fruit were out of the garden.

"You've made a beautiful home for me, Frampton," she said.

"They've done me well, my chaps," he said. "Little Roly-Poly put his guts into it, and the men were what I knew they would be. If you put it to English chaps the right way, they'll do anything. The trouble is, that they're so used to doing tripe that they've come to look on tripe as the right thing. By

the way, I've got a neat idea for a new gun; but I'll tell you of that when we're away."

"Fram, I don't think we'll talk of guns and killings while we're away," she said.

"No, perhaps not," he said. "But it's a neat idea. And now, come, we must have a look at Spirr Wood and your cousin's bungalow."

The cottage at Spirr had been finished more than a month before. Margaret's cousin, Tim, was already there, settled in. The two walked to the cottage by the track left by the builders. They did not find the cousin at home. They called, "Tim," as they approached, but had no answer except a kind of whistling mew from within the living-room from a young hawk, fallen from its nest, which Tim was trying to rear. On the back door was an old envelope, marked:

"BACK AT SIX. LEAVE ONE LOAF"

in black chalk.

"He's off," Frampton said. "He oughtn't to have gone off like that. I specially told him we should be here. You can see, he's got rather a jolly place of it."

The place was, indeed, very pretty, and in a pretty part of the wood. On the one hand, it looked down to the water, where the valley had been dammed, so as to make an attractive pool, big and deep enough for the warden to bathe in, if he wished. On the other side, you looked up the slope of the wood into a variety of green. As they looked, a red squirrel came down and gibbered at them, from within a few feet of their heads.

"That's Tim's squirrel," Frampton said. "It comes into his shed for monkey nuts and things."

Margaret held a hand to it gently, and spoke to it; presently

it took a standing leap to another bough, whisked and cocked there two or three times in its jerky way, and then sped round a tree bole. Watching still, they saw its little head cocked round the bulge of the trunk, looking at them.

"You'll have plenty of friends of that sort in your sanctuary," he said. "Tim says the wood is full of them."

Margaret was looking about her with an air of blissful happiness, such as he had not seen upon her face before. She was very beautiful, he thought; old Naunton ought to have taken her for his Madonna.

"I think this place is one of the most beautiful in the world," she said. "I shall spend hours here. I'm going down to see if there are any moorhens' nests among the reeds."

"While you go down, I'll just go up to the far end," he said. "I want to see how the fencing looks. And I want to see the spindle trees. I do want spindles there. I'll not be a minute."

He went swiftly through the thin scrub of Spirr, to a patch which had been cleared, to make way for a broom plantation later. Crossing this, he came to the fence and could examine it. He craned over and looked to his left. There was nothing amiss with the work on that side. He then looked to his right, and at the same time caught a whiff of cigarette smoke, and knew that there were persons there. Looking to his right rear, he saw that he was being watched, with no friendly eyes. He was not sensitive to unfriendly looks; he could be as unfriendly as anybody he knew; so he looked back, and summed them up. There were three of them, two women and a man. They were standing inside the covert, under the fir-trees which had so caught Margaret's fancy, when first she had seen the wood. The women were spare, hard-faced ladies, in tweed suits; the man, who was much younger, was a tall fellow, in brown

golfing clothes, with little red tassels at the knees. They were looking at him with disfavour; they were commenting on him unfavourably, under their breaths; and instantly he knew that these were the dwellers in the district resenting this gunman fellow. He judged, too, that as they had been caught trespassing, just under his notice, they would be rude first. One of the women advanced towards him. She had a groom face. She was hard in the eye and the jaw, yet she had made concessions to her sex; her hair had been expensively treated, her eyebrows had been plucked to a narrow line, and her bare right hand, which held her cigarette, showed finger-nails the colour of blood.

"It must have cost all of forty quid to fit you for the ring," Frampton muttered to himself, as he took in these details, with the comment, "and god-awful waste, at that."

She was used to an insolent world, and was pretty well insensitive to the feelings of others. She came up to Mansell; she knew well who he was.

"Mr. Mansell," she said, "is it true that you're going to preserve Spirr?"

"Yes."

"I mean for birds?"

"Yes."

"It has never been preserved before."

"It will be now."

"And that's a keeper's cottage, with a keeper living in it?"

"Yes."

"Ha." She turned at this and went back to her friends. "It's true," she said. "Well, I told Posh he'd regret it. Now the harm's done."

Frampton was not sure what harm had been done, but saw that his stock among them had fallen even lower.

"Well," the speaker continued, "we'd better get out of it, before the keeper turfs us out."

The other woman gave a hard little dry giggle, and the party moved off and clambered over the fence. The man said something, which made them all laugh. A few minutes later, Frampton saw them at the cross lanes, Tibb's Cross as it was called, at the end of the long pale pasture outside Spirr. They were getting into a big bright yellow car, which drove off swiftly, presently, towards Tatchester.

"They didn't seem to like me," Frampton said to himself. "Rash souls; I tremble for them." He knew that Spirr had inspired a poem still partly remembered there. "It's that fox-hunt," he thought, "that began at Spirr. I suppose," he mused, "these people have a kind of superstition about it; a sort of *Hart Leap Well* feeling."

However, he rejoined Margaret, who had seen the nests of three moorhens down by the water; they had much to talk of; she was delighted with the bird-boxes; so many of them had been occupied.

"I'm sorry Tim wasn't there," she said. "I'd have liked to have gone to the long-tailed tit's nest and seen the dreys that he writes of."

Frampton was vexed at Tim's not being in. Why the devil had he not been in, when he had been told to be in? He had a shrewd suspicion that the fine weather was taking Tim out on the binge. Now that the nest-boxes were up, he had relaxed. However, it was only a few hours to his wedding day; he was not going to bother about Tim just then.

"The thing that lad needs," he thought, "is dam-slam hard physical work that must be done. I'll put him to the job of building a bathing-shed and plunge there. That'll keep his socks pulled up, the damn young slacker."

Margaret said: "After tea, Fram, I want you to drive me home to Holtspur. I'll give you dinner there, and then you can see me to the Women's Institute. You must leave me there at half-past eight. They're making me a presentation, I don't know what; but you won't be able to come in to it. Then, to-morrow, I shall not see you at all probably, for I've a mort of packing to do, still, and people to see and so forth."

"Right," Frampton said. "I'll see you to your Institute. I'll bet you it's a clock in a glass case."

At home, at Newbury, they found the old man in great excitement, having that noon laid bare some Roman remains in his kitchen-garden; from what had been laid bare, it was plain, that a villa had stood there. As the things were interesting, Frampton and Margaret stayed on with him after tea, helping to clear the pavement, in the midst of which a sort of beast, a cross as it seemed between a tiger and a Newfoundland dog, was done in mosaic, gardant, passant.

"Look at him," Frampton said, "the results of empire and capitalism. Bad taste making itself felt a thousand miles from the centre. Think of the impulse which sent this beast out here and set him down as a flooring. Think of the mind that chose it and insisted on its being done."

"I'd rather not, if you don't mind," Margaret said. "But no museum is complete without one of these things. I'm going to have one more shovelful for luck. I'm going to try at the side here."

She thrust her little spade into the earth and drew it away, loaded. Emptying the load carefully, she looked at her catch and parted it asunder with a piece of garden stick.

"I've got something here," she said. "I do believe it's gold." She disentangled the thing from the roots of nettle that had grown through some of it and scraped it with the point of

stick. Frampton went over to her side to see. "It is gold," she said, "or has gold about it. It's a fibula," she said, as the cloggings fell from it.

"It's a jolly fine fibula," he said. "Debased period. And some of it certainly is gold. Let's put it under a hot-water tap and see what we shall see."

"I wonder how it got there," she said. "It isn't the kind of thing that people would have left about."

"I fancy the Romano Britons left everything about towards the end," he said, "and took to the woods for safety and never came back."

The moon was near her full that night. After he had left Margaret at the Institute to receive the wedding present, he drove up to the Downs. He stayed there for hours, enjoying the solitude, the space and the continual booming drone of the cockchafers which came blundering about him. He loved the Downs, as almost the last thing left to us of peace and bigness. The night was fine and still, save for the light wind which always blows on the downland. The moon was ringed with tiny white cirro cumulus which held about her and never seemed to shift. A hem of brownness was round her; she was tranquil and spilled quiet upon the night. An owl or two passed from time to time; and others called from far away. The valley lay below, with a few moving gleams, flashing and disappearing as motors went or came round particular bends. A big express train swept its line of lights across the county. He was deeply moved by the beauty and peace. For a few minutes he doubted whether he could justify his life work of making guns, which would destroy so many of the sons of men; including his own, perhaps. He loathed professional soldiers more than any people in the world, in spite of the simple virtues which so many of them showed. From the

beauty of the night, he began to think of soldiers, and decided that while professional soldiers had power in the world, and the chances were that they would have such power for many years to come, any guns that lightened the tasks of the unhappy slaves under them, and tended to make the ruthless folly of modern war effective, fatal and perhaps brief, would be to the good.

He stayed on so long upon the downland that he was startled presently by hearing the church clocks from many hamlets and villages out of sight on all sides of him, striking midnight and chiming for it. Soon, the cocks would be crowing. He thought with a pang, then, "to-morrow will be my wedding day, and I shall be married to Margaret." A qualm passed through his mind, that he had perhaps left marriage till too late in life, and that he would loathe to find his freedom checked. Still, he would have Margaret instead of freedom; a pretty good exchange, for what of value was there in the life he had been leading? and who would care if it ended? He wanted something liker a home than that.

"Well," he said to himself, "it'll be cock-crow soon. I've got to be at the Works at ten to finish off before going away. I'd better be thinking of moving."

He walked back to his car through the longish, dry downland grass from which the cockchafers came whirring and blundering. He turned the car across the track, still known as the Shipway, from its having once been the path along which so many thousands of sheep were driven to the downland sheep fairs of May. The chafers blundered against his glass, or hit the bonnet and slithered off it. Soon he was on the road, driving for home. It was not a long drive, for one like himself who liked pace, on a clear night, after midnight. On his way, he suddenly thought of Margaret a few miles from him. He

thought that he would like to see her house and garden in the moonlight.

"I'll just turn aside and have a look at it in the moonlight," he thought.

About a hundred yards from the house, he left the car and walked along the road towards the rookery trees among which the house stood. He saw what he thought to be a light in Margaret's bedroom window, but another step showed him that it was only moonlight upon the glass. On his left was a copse or spinney, towards which some little creature ran across the road; to his right a side door into the garden. He thought that this side door might not be locked, as it had a curious catch or trick for opening, not known to many people. He knew the catch, the door at once opened to him: he went into the garden, treading on the grass and feeling a little like a burglar.

There were some white roses close to him; farther on there were masses of white tobacco plant. All the garden was in the drowse of heavy summer, with the moonlight over all. A few moths were moving silently from flower to flower. From time to time a bat came past. He was one of those keen hearers able to catch the faint shrill cry of bats. He listened to the reedy calls, and counted the owls within hearing. From time to time, the noise of these things ceased, leaving a silence unbroken save for some sudden collapse of rose-petals, falling from the overblown flower upon the grass beneath, or the drone of a beetle, or the rustle and click of some beetle alighting perhaps upon a leaf.

He moved farther into the garden, so that he could see the high, sharp roof of the old house. Somebody had said that the house had been a nunnery grange, and that the garden had been laid out by the nuns. It was one of the most beautiful

and simple gardens known to him. At the two ends were the very old, simple, graceful summer-houses with pointed roofs and a neat little stone globe over each of the points.

He was thinking, "how wonderful it would be if Margaret were here to share this beauty with me," when he became aware suddenly that she was in the garden, not fifty yards from him, standing in the grassy walk, half turned away from him, and looking at the moon. She was in a white wrap, which he well knew. He feared to move forward, lest he should scare her, but at last he called "Margaret" in a way agreed on between them, and as she turned, went forward.

"I half thought you might turn up here," she said. "Isn't the night wonderful?"

"I've been up on the Downs until just now," he said. "Then, as I came down, I thought I'd just look in to the garden here."

"Mrs. Grundy will jump if she sees us," she said.

"Mrs. Grundy may."

Her hair had been plaited for the night; the dark plaits were caught about her head with a bright narrow clasp. She looked extraordinarily unearthly in her white dress in the moonlight. He was reminded for a moment of one of the Sylphides; the face looked like a mask.

"You're just like the *Prelude* dancer in the *Sylphides*," he said.

"It is strange, your saying that," she said. "I was thinking I might be like one of the dancing swan women in the Northern Story. Did you know, that I have a sort of Russian cousin, who dances?"

"No, I didn't know."

She moved from him, with swaying arms, in little *pas de bourrées*.

"You didn't know that I can dance," she said.

"Not know?" he said. "Didn't I fall in love with you at a dance?"

"My cousin was dancing in London last May; but I was away in Sweden."

"I don't want to hear about your cousin," he said, "when I've got you here."

"You'll have lots of me presently," she said.

"I've long had the idea," he said, "as you know, of having some of the processes of the Works done up on the Waste above *Mullples*, if I could get the land there. I'd like to build a real Works with a real town about it. It is only a thought."

"Well, St Paul's was only a thought once," she said. "We must talk of this thoroughly. What will you call your real town?"

"St. Margarets."

They talked for a while; the talk of lovers interests themselves only; he suggested that they should meet late that afternoon, or early in the evening, for a walk to the barrow called Grim's Grave. It was a short walk from where they were at that moment; perhaps two-thirds of a mile over the fields, to a little spinney where the barrow stood, like a little old extinct volcano, with its top all fallen in. He would meet her at the stile leading to the fields at half-past five. At six, they would part until they met at the church next day.

They talked merrily together for a little while; then she told him that he had better be off to bed, as he was still half an hour from his father's house and might well puncture on the way.

"This time next moon," he said, "we'll be looking on the Baltic, I hope. I hope you'll be happy, Peggy."

"If I were not sure I would be, do you think I would be marrying you?"

"Yes," he said, "I do."

They turned to leave the garden. She turned at the garden door.

"Good-bye and good luck," she said. "Half-past five, then, at the stile beyond the wheelwright's."

"Half-past five. I'm glad we've had this moonlight talk. I shall remember it."

"So shall I," she said. "Good night."

He was up early, in spite of his late going to bed. He was in his car by seven, so as to dodge the rush of traffic; by nine he was in the Works, with a dozen different things to see to, each sufficient to put Margaret and the moonlight out of his mind. By twelve he had done his necessary tasks; he could hand over for a month, to his partner. He washed his hands of works and guns, shook hands with his partner, received the usual good wishes from two or three of the staff, and so escaped to his car, which was driven rapidly to a country club where he had a plunge in the swimming-pool, and then lunch. After lunch, he had to see a man in London about some prints for Margaret. It was full three before he turned out of London. He had plenty to think of on the way, because the road was full of traffic; however, he was used to that, and made good time notwithstanding. He was a vindictive driver. If a man cut in on him, to pass, he would accelerate and cut in on him. He gave rather more than he received in this way. He was at the stile a quarter of an hour before the appointed time. He pulled the car on to the strip of grass by the roadside, where a wisp of copse gave shade. He sat on the stile, thinking that at that time on the morrow he would be a married man. He supposed that it would be a clipping of his wings, but all men consented to it sooner or later, pretty nearly all; he had dodged it a lot longer than most; but then, he hadn't been susceptible;

he hadn't been caught in the man-trap; he had waited till he had met the woman he really wanted. The wisp of copse was fenced by a wall. A weasel appeared upon the wall and looked at him with interest. The two stared at each other for a few seconds, then the weasel popped down into the copse and pattered about there on its affairs. It went off presently; a robin and then a hedge sparrow hopped on the grassy strip, gathered each some food and flew away. He heard the Windlesham church clock chime for half-past five, but Margaret did not appear. He looked at his watch; the church clock was a minute fast; she was sure to be there in a minute; she was a punctual soul; even the day before her marriage she would be punctual. He himself loathed unpunctuality as the very devil; appointed moments ought to be kept; people with no sense of time got short shift from him.

Five minutes after the half-hour, he heard footsteps coming, and went to the bend in the road, thinking that they must be Margaret's; but they were the steps of an old woman, whom he had seen once or twice in the village, "rather a character," that is, not quite sane, wearing the old battered hat and shapeless clothes which the old in English villages affect. She was mumbling to herself; she looked at him curiously as she went by, with a shrewdness which was not mad, wished him "Good evening" and passed on; but turned to look at him after she had passed.

He loathed old age, as he loathed poverty; it was so often inefficient; he wanted to scrap it. He remembered something which had been told him about this old woman: she had bewitched a farmer's sheep, so the story went, so that they all vomited needles. He wished that he could think that the story were true.

The minutes passed, to his growing impatience. Presently,

it was a quarter to six; yet still there was no Margaret. He had always held a theory that the simplest explanation is generally the right one, when problems of this sort occur. No doubt, on the eve of her wedding, people would be coming in with gifts, or asking to see her, or telephoning, from that misguided interest which goes with want of understanding.

"The female bore has got her," he muttered, "one of these old prurient crones."

He thought, that as their walk would now be ruined, he had better walk up towards the house, meet her on the way and walk home with her. He stepped up the road, round the bend. She was not in sight yet. The wheelwright, so-called, was at work outside his shop; he was no longer a wheelwright, but did odd jobs with bicycles, motors and the sale of oils and petrols. He was bent over a basin of water in which he held a bicycle tyre. He was slowly turning the tyre round, watching for the bubbles which would betray the puncture; when he heard Frampton's footsteps he looked up. He was a somewhat slow-witted, but very gentle and good man. His wife, who was standing by him, said something to him in a low voice; he thereupon straightened himself up and put down the tyre. Frampton had seen him singing in Margaret's choir at the village concert; he had also heard him imitating the cries of several British birds; he had spoken to him then; and had liked him. Seeing that the man now advanced to speak, he turned to him. The man wavered always in his speech, so much Frampton remembered. He noticed that he was now looking very solemn.

"Good evening," Frampton said.

The man was wearing his black Sunday trousers, which seemed odd to Frampton.

"Mr. Mansell, sir," the man said, "they been trying to

get at you, sir. I hope as someone told you the sad news."

A pang of coming frightful disaster went into Frampton's very soul and was then turned out by an act of will, so that he might deal with the situation.

"What news is that?" he asked.

"There's been an accident, Mr. Mansell; to poor Miss Margaret."

He was a simple good soul; he began to cry; his wife was crying at his side and mopping her eyes with the end of her apron.

"She was killed, sir, in her motor-car," the wife sobbed.

"Along about twelve o'clock, sir," the wheelwright said. "She was turning into the road in her car when a London car went into her. She was killed, sir, and the London man not far short of killed."

Stunned as he was, Frampton thanked them. He remembered something in the life of Drake, when disaster threatened, how Drake had contrived to keep going, and to keep his crew going.

"There will be time," he quoted to himself; his world was spinning about him, as he walked on; "that will be the end of me, pretty much," he said. Odds and ends of verse rang in his head, about the little house they had built to be so gay with. That came into his mind over and over again. Yet he felt now and again that perhaps the news was not true. In the village, there was a sort of awe, as he passed; all stood to look.

"Look, damn you," he muttered savagely, as he saw the elbows nudging and the faces turning. "Here you've got a moving picture for nothing; and to-morrow you'll have the gutter press. Take a good look."

At the outside of *Holtspur Manor*, a group of idlers lounged smoking and chatting. They had camped in the shade of the

trees and had been there for some time. As he drew near, these people dropped their cards and cigarettes; they sprang up, seized their cameras and at once began to photograph him. "Famous Gun-Maker Walks to House of Dead Fiancée." There were a dozen of them, male and female. The clicks of the cameras reminded him of triggers. One robust man, with a cinema camera, seemed to be machine-gunning him. There were little cries of:

"Look this way, Mr. Mansell; just turn your head. Won't you just look this way a second?"

He was the corpse, they were the cannibals; there could be no doubt that the news was true. The vultures would not gather for Life.

The news was true. Presently, he was at the old house, speaking to Margaret's sister. Margaret's body was upstairs. He heard all that was known. It was an accident, like most of the disasters on the road. The chief cowman at the dairy farm was the only man who had with his own eyes seen it happen; two had heard it from a little distance; these two dairymen had seen a big car going at great speed along the road, and had then heard a crash at the corner. They had no doubt that the car was going too fast, and cutting across side roads without warning. All three men swore to having heard Margaret sound her horn as she drove out.

At the inquest, these things were repeated and sworn to. The London man had died by that time. He was a well-known sporting man, who had had his licence endorsed for careless driving. He had had four whiskies, topped off with a gin "to settle them," at a road-side inn, a few miles away, and was supposedly hurrying to keep a luncheon engagement with his fiancée. His car was smashed almost beyond repair. It was supposed that at the moment of impact, he was moving at

sixty miles an hour. All the upper part of the car was torn clean off the body and flung along the road. The coroner's court found that deceased met their ends as the result of accident, due primarily to drunkenness and want of common caution in the male driver. They expressed their sympathy with the two bereaved fiancées, and recommended that a danger sign be placed near the turning where the disaster had occurred. One of the jury wished it to be set on record that the accident was directly due to the abuse of alcohol, and that it ought to be made a penal offence, to serve alcohol of any sort to one in charge of a car.

That was the end of Margaret Holtspur, a charming and beautiful woman, "killed on the eve of her wedding," as the gutter press printed in big type.

Margaret was buried. The whole village turned out to the funeral. The grave was heaped with flowers. Photographers on the churchyard wall got various views of Frampton and his father as they stood near the grave during the service. These were in the evening papers that night, and in the cheaper morning papers next day. "Well-Known Gun Manufacturer Mourns Fiancée Dead in Car Smash," was one heading; "Frampton Mansell at Grave," was another; "The Long Farewell: Frampton Mansell Bids Adieu to Love," was a third.

However, the burial came to an end; the body was laid in the grave and left there. The mourners moved from the grave to their cars, followed by a great rush of photographers, who wanted to get close-ups of the gun-maker and his father. Frampton looked at some of these men, and said: "You damned carrion-hunters," and was thanked by them for giving them so fair a chance to take him. After this, he drove away with his father to the house at Newbury. His father was quiet and sympathetic, being a very feeling man, who had been

through many sorrows of his own. He said little on the way home except:

"The great thing is, never to let it make you cynical. It is all in that."

Presently, they were at the house at Newbury. The father went up to his room to rest. Frampton went out to walk up and down in the walk between the hedges of hornbeams. His father's spaniel, Joe, saw him there, and came floundering and wagging out to suggest a walk together. He scowled at the dog, who saw that something was amiss, and wagged and cringed, still hoping against hope, but at last saw that the walk was hopeless and lay down there, at the walk's end, to watch if perchance the black mood would pass.

After a long, long time, he went in, flung off his mourning clothes, and bathed and dressed for dinner. It was delayed for a minute by a telephone enquiry from the Press, to ask if the recent sad bereavement would interfere with his plans for the new gun.

"Then I can say, Mr. Mansell, that you are carrying on as usual? Business as usual, eh?"

He hung up on this optimist, and let the telephone ring unacknowledged for the rest of the evening.

During dinner, his father said:

"You will come away with me to-morrow, Fram. I've taken berths to New York. We'll fly to Vancouver together and see some of those plants there. I've long wanted to do that. We'll be away three weeks or a month."

The next morning, they motored to Southampton and so away into the West.

He had planned to be in the West for three weeks only, but stayed on for six, in frequent change of scene and in the great heat which his father always enjoyed. He found no consolation

for his loss, but something which kept his mind from it; strangers to talk with, and new landscape to look at. Before leaving England, and while on the sea, he had determined to sell *Mullples* for what it would fetch as soon as he returned, but in the far West, the thought of that old house, which he had rescued from ruin, plucked at his heart; he had put a lot of thought and imagination into it, as well as all his hope. "Peggy liked it," he thought. "She wanted that sanctuary at Spirr. I'll keep it going for her sake. I'm not likely to meet another woman I shall want to marry."

On their return to England, late in September, they drove to the Newbury house. It was all full of memories of Margaret; it was a grim home-coming to Frampton. He spent a couple of days there before going back to the Works.

"Look here, Fram," his father said, "what d'you say to giving up *Mullples* and keeping on with me here for your week-ends? We've always got along together, and you know I'd be glad of you."

"No," Frampton said, "I've made *Mullples*. It's my flesh and blood. I put my guts into that old house. It's me. Besides, I've begun something there. I'll not draw back, now I've put my hand to the plough. I'll winter it and summer it before I chuck it."

"I expected you'd say something like that," the old man said, "but I'm thinking that the winter's on us. You won't find much congenial company there in winter-time, with nobody but shooters and fox-hunters. What will you do with all those sportsmen? Why not spend the autumn and winter here, at any rate? In the spring, go down to *Mullples*."

"No," he said, "I ought to go to *Mullples*. I've got all the household there. I've got them all pledged to stick it with me, and I won't go back on them. I've got the thing to go. I mean

to make it go. You see, it can't go without me." He mused for a moment and then went on. "You must not bother about the sportsmen. I've never failed to find congenial company, wherever I've been," he said. "I shall only be there for the long week-ends; and there'll always be work to do in the gardens or along by the waters. I can bring people down from the Works, and from Town, to eke out the local supply. I've got my gun to work at, if I'm bored; but I've never been bored yet."

"I don't believe you ever have been, Fram," his father said. "It's a good record. But you've never had a winter yet, in an English countryside. By the way, which pack of hounds is it at *Mullples*?"

"We are in the Tuncester country, what they call the Tunster; and close to the edge of the P D Q."

"Are you going to hunt?"

"I? Hunt? No. Why do you ask a thing like that? Is thy servant a dog?"

"Not at all; but there's a note in the paper here that the master of the Tunster has broken his thigh in a fall and will be unable to ride for a long time; the mastership will be taken by somebody else. You might do worse than offer your services. It would tide you through a bad time."

"I'd rather have the bad time. Why hunt, when there are a thousand things that need doing right under one's nose?"

"I think you under-estimate fox-hunting," the old man said. "The English have only had two pleasures, as far as I can follow the matter, in the last three hundred years; puritanic religion and fox-hunting. Both seem to me now to be in their decadence. I do not feel that either yields or ever has yielded a very desirable joy, but remove them and what remains to the poor land?"

"Drink," Frampton said.

"No, no. The days of drink are past. The present seeming boom in drink is only due to the fact that drink now is weaker than it was, so that women have discovered it. No. I'm afraid the only thing remaining will be patent medicines. I'm not sure that they haven't ousted the old firms already. And they have every advantage. The Puritans have only one God, and the fox-hunters only one kind of fox, the one to be worshipped and the other to be killed in only one sort of way. But man has two hundred and forty major ailments, and two hundred and forty nostrums for each, so I think the drug people will win."

"I hope so, I'm sure," Frampton said.

"Yes, I suppose you do; but why, Fram?"

"I'm not religious in any way. You were generous to me in that. You helped me to see that unless religion is a mystical thing, it is not important to the soul. I loathe sport, because it is based on cruelty. No man would tolerate the torture of sport if he would consider it. Think of the outcry there would be if, I will not say grown men and women, but boys were to chase a cat, or a dog, or a pony, with dogs. It would be counted an infamy and the boys would be birched by magistrates' order, or have their souls examined by some analyst. Yet sportsmen (grown men and women, mind you; mature beings) are permitted to run stags, foxes and otters to death in every county of the land. These same people are quick enough to raise a stir, if some lout or brute draws a badger or has a main of cocks. Then they'll hunt a stag or a fox or an otter till he drops; and boast of it in the Press for years, especially if a few horses are killed. 'Grand day with the Tunster: Stag takes to sea: Seven couple of hounds drowned': you know the kind of tosh. And then the tripe about all these fellows being born cavalry

leaders and the rest of it. And the improvement in the breed of horses. What is the hunter good for, except hunting? He isn't any use for draught. As for chargers, I hope we've come to the end of them. As to the devotion of the fox-hunter for his favourite horse, it may exist, and probably does; but I've seen several hunting men scrap their old hunters after years of service. . . .

"You were saying that the English are giving up their two pleasures, Puritanism and fox-hunting, for a third pleasure, the taking of patent medicines. D'ye know, I take that for a sign of life. They realise they aren't up to the mark and are trying to make themselves fit. Presently, they'll learn that they'll not be really well till they work in the fields again, in the open air, and eat the fresh food they raise; then they'll find that health will suggest and cause pleasure enough. Long before then, though, they'll drop a few of the forms of death they love most, including Mansell's matchless guns. They'll drop a lot of bunk and a deal of blah before they get to that point."

"They'll drop what we call civilisation."

"Yes. And what does it amount to? Money-snatching in cities and fox-hunting in the country. Who would be tuppence the worse if the whole of Europe died to-night?"

The old man looked at his son with sad eyes; Margaret's death had made him cynical, as he had feared it might.

"The world would be the worse," he said; "some right ways are being tried, as well as some wrong ones. But, think over my suggestion about hunting, or at least riding. There is something in being a part of one's community, whatever it may be; a man gets strength from it. All the mess in the world seems to me to come from that one point, that the governors are out of touch with the governed. You'll find that they'll expect you

to hunt. In that Mullples district, hunting is the main occupation and interest of the inhabitants. The paper said that the chap with the broken thigh had brought it, that is the Tunster pack, to a fine pitch of perfection. He's a fox-hunter who knows his business, it said."

"I suppose it isn't a difficult business," Frampton growled. "Judging by the people who do it most. Few of them do anything else and couldn't if they had to. Imagine them on a committee. They were in charge in the early part of the War, and a pretty lot of tombstones are raised to their credit."

"You're unjust to them, Fram," the old man said. "The vote of the world is for them. I regret it, perhaps, but I don't cavil at it. In this case, the thing that weighs is beauty. The beauty of the hunt is so great that people forget the cruelty."

"Don't tell me that the fox-hunters care for the beauty," his son said. "They like the swank and the display. If they cared for beauty, there'd be more of it in the towns and houses they live in. They don't; they don't give a tuppenny curse for anything about it, but going fast in an expensive suit."

"My own youth would have been the poorer without that beauty," the old man said. "However, you will presently be settled where you can judge of it better than I. I had nothing to put in its place; you have."

Frampton had to spend the next week at the Works picking up the strings and resuming control. At the end of the week, he took train to Tatchester, meaning to spend the week-end at *Mullples*. It was to be his first home-coming.

He had so loathed the thought of going home without Margaret that he had put it off as long as he could; it was now a time of beginning frost, short days and fluttering leaves. The line kept beating in his brain, about the little house "we built to be so gay with." He had never gone to *Mullples* from

Tatchester with Margaret; he chose that route so that he might not be reminded of her; but he was reminded of her cruelly continually. He had seen most of the landmarks on the line with her, at one time or another. There were women in the compartment with him of the kinds he most loathed; creatures with plucked eyebrows, machined hair, rouged lips, scarlet nails; all smoking. The sight of them filled him with rage; they were left and she had been taken; he could see no sense nor justice in it.

"It's part of the infernal game called Life," he thought.

He bought an evening paper and read it as the train sped through the fields. At the end of the paper, his eye caught a familiar name in the column headed "Hunting Gossip." He read the paragraph through.

'Lovers of sport will be delighted to hear that Col. Annual-Tilter will hunt the Tunster country during the regrettable absence of the Master, whose broken bone we are glad to learn is progressing satisfactorily. Col. Annual-Tilter is no stranger to the Tunster country, and hopes to show as good sport as his predecessor.'

"The hell he hopes it," Frampton muttered to himself. "Annual-Tilter again, that dud in the Anti-Progress Office, who turned down my gun in the War, and blocked even the trial of it for a year. Hopes to show as good sport as his predecessor, does he? Let him not come near *Mullples*, he and his damnation pack."

His old rage with the dud rose up in him. He had longed to fire a few rounds of his gun through Annual-Tilter's foolish head. Now Tilter might be bringing his hounds to draw Spirr. Would he, by George? Just let him try. The thought of having a little of his own back was almost more than he could bear.

The train drew up at the dismal station of Tatchester. He descended; his driver, who had been waiting for him, ran up and took his gear. Looking back at the train, Frampton saw the hated Colonel himself getting down from one of the smoking compartments in the same carriage. It was dark by this time, and Tatchester station was ill-lit, as ever, but the Colonel was unmistakable.

"The same simple English character," Frampton muttered. "But if I'd a mouth like that, I'd either grow a moustache or have it sewn up."

The Colonel's mouth was not his strong point, but he was not a bad-looking man; he bore himself well. As he looked about him under one of the light-standards, a lady advanced to meet him; she was the lady who had spoken to Frampton in Spirr Wood a few weeks before. She was dressed at much greater cost and less success than on the last occasion, having been to a sherry-party; Frampton caught a reek of sherry and scent from her as she passed. She hailed the Colonel in her rather high, cracked voice.

"Evenin', Posh."

"Evenin'. Marvous train," the Colonel said.

"Absooty marvous," the lady agreed.

The Colonel was fumbling for his ticket.

"So you are the Posh who was to regret my having Spirr," Frampton muttered. "Well, my son, if I can make you regret it, I will."

It was an unfortunate meeting. He drove on from that point to *Multiples* with none but sad and bitter thoughts. But for death, Margaret would perhaps have been to the station to meet him, as this Tilter woman had come to meet her man. Now Margaret was gone, and that thin hag, eyebrow-plucked and with the sherry stink, was here. He was coming alone to

a house he had made for his love and did not want for himself one little bit.

The car turned to the left at last, at the conspicuous white gate and posts which he had put there, at Margaret's suggestion, to show their guests where to turn. He saw the lights of his home, a long line of festal lights, all on for his homecoming. This was the little house he had built to be so gay with; it seemed like a country house in hell. This was his first home; he hated the look and the thought of it.

The door was thrown open; a gush of light spread across the terrace and made visible some small, whitish moths flitting in the evening air. There in the hall ready to welcome him, were the servants, who had been with him for years, though he supposed that they liked his father much better than himself. There was Charlotte, red-faced, very devout, strong as an ox, and good at a game of bowls. At her side was the stalwart Helga, with the fine contralto voice, which he had had trained; she had some sense of design, too, and embroidered her dresses at wrists and throat. Farther back was the kitchen staff; the cook, whom they all called Pongie, a short, plump, very good-humoured soul, an admirable cook, still under thirty, whose deplorable husband had left her. With Pongie were the two kitchen-maids, Binnie and Minnie, both of them the daughters of Mark, for years his driver and general aid, who was said to be related to one who had been in the boat with Captain Bligh. There they all were, glad to welcome him home, and determined to welcome him specially this time, for all were sorry for him, more than they cared to say. Mrs. Haulover came through the people in the porch and was the first to welcome him.

He had promised Margaret, in some idle moment, that when they came to *Mullples* he would give his parish church a fair

trial. He remembered this, in time, the next morning, and therefore set out for Weston Mulples Church to attend morning service there. Bitter thoughts were in him as he walked, of the injustice of Margaret's death.

"A senseless fury with abhorred shears," he said to himself, "a fury who sees the world made a muckheap and never lifts a finger, and then sends a drunkard loose in a car to kill the one bright star in the nation."

He thought over the few church services he had attended in his life. He had been to very few, save the compulsory ones at school, and remembered none, as touched in any way with what he could imagine to be religious feeling.

"I suppose each of the worshippers is supposed to bring his share of God into the communal church," he mused, "and I suppose I've never done that. I wish to God I could find God. Some chaps do or have. These places, churches, are said to help in the search. They've never helped me yet; but they may, now, perhaps. Yet how can they? How can this old rigmarole, with its whine and its oiliness, and its bad verse and ancient prose and worn-out tunes and the tales one can't believe, help a chap like me, who have power in my thought to kill half a nation?"

He did not expect much from his visit to Weston Mulples Church. He kept thinking, that religion ought to be and is an exciting, kindling, overwhelming thing; it was a getting into the love of God, which was like the light and energy of the Sun. Who could be in that light and energy and see his brother have need? Who could be in that light and energy and want to make a Mansell Death Spray? He felt far enough from any sharing of that light and energy.

As he drew near to the church, his mind began to prick against the curiosity of the neighbours. He had timed his

arrival for the stroke of eleven, thinking that the parson would be punctual, and that the loiterers would be all in the church at that time. He found the church clock five minutes slow; about fifty people were loitering outside the church; a horrible little bell was going in the tower, and he was well stared at, as he entered the church and took his seat. There were whisperings and nudgings.

"That's Mr. Mansell, who makes the guns. . . . That's the new man at *Mullples*. . . . That's the chap whose girl was killed the day of marriage. . . . He spent thousands on his house, now he'll never live there. . . . He makes guns. . . . His girl killed herself, they say, rather than marry him. . . . Mullples. . . . Pots of money. . . . Father was a baker. . . . Awful bounder. . . ."

He heard, or imagined that he heard, all these things. The churchwarden, an old farmer, ushered him to a seat. He sat down, bent his brow into his hand in the way usual among church-goers, and then settled to an examination of the church.

He knew a good deal about churches. He summed up this one as follows: "Norman plan, small and beautiful; nothing but the sanctuary remaining; present structure begun in fourteenth century, 1350, and added to, with much rebuilding and changing, till about 1520. After that, very little until a ceiling and some whitewash, about 1740. After that, an almost total neglect for a hundred and forty years, then a collection and a bazaar, a scraper firm put in and a general clean-up, coinciding with the first bath-room in the squire's manor; the results before us, bright pine pews, varnished, ye olde church style; gas brackets the same, by the well-known firm; the Bish. out from Tatchester to open it."

At this point, the padre came in with the choir and the service began. It went on in the usual way, with the usual

intonations, the usual tunes, the usual signals and smiles from woman to woman, the farmers coming out strong in the psalms, the ladies getting their own back in the hymns, a sigh of content when the litany ended, a rustle of bliss when they all settled for the sermon.

The sermon did not interest Frampton; during the giving out of the text, his eye was caught by a bit of old glass in a window across the church in the north aisle. He decided, that he would not enter this church again, except to look at this glass. Yet he gave the parson a good mark; he seemed a good chap. Somehow, he was angry with the institution. He was a hungry sheep looking up and not being fed; there was no food for him there. He had the justice to ask himself, if he would have taken any good offered by this particular shepherd, who no doubt would offer some, if he had the inkling of a suspicion that some were wanted. The service came to an end; he walked swiftly out and away, followed by curious eyes.

He was much discussed at lunch-time throughout the parish.

"He went away so quickly," the parson's wife said. "I meant to speak to him, to ask him to come to tea this afternoon."

"The fellow went away as if the hounds were after him," the squire, Button Budd, said. "A dark-looking fellow. Didn't at all like his looks. To tell the truth, I'm glad. I didn't want to have to ask him to lunch. Fellow makes guns; father was a baker; low fellow, not at all the sort of thing."

All the same, Mrs. Button Budd, who shared his prejudices, felt that her husband ought to call at *Mullples*.

"It is only leaving a card," she said. "He will very likely be out; and even if he's in you need not see him; the cards are the important thing. We need not see him, if he returns

the call; but anyhow, we shall have done our duty, if anything should crop up later."

Button Budd did not much relish calling.

"They say he's got all sorts of queer painter fellows to do his walls," he objected.

However, in the sacred name of neighbourliness, he dared this menace to his morals, and through his, the State's, and called.

As it chanced, Mansell was at home when he came. It chanced, also, that he was at the point of coming out through the front door, at the instant of the squire's ringing of the bell. There the two met; the squire could not at the moment find the wit to say:

"I only came to leave cards; I don't want to know you, of course."

Frampton shook him by the hand and asked him to come in; in fact, had him in, somehow, before the squire quite knew where he was. Frampton took him into his study, and offered him tea and a smoke. He replied that he never drank tea, except when called in the morning, and never smoked, except after dinner. He settled into a chair, and looked with much perplexity and misgiving at the loves of Tristan and Isolt, then looking at their best. The two men took stock of each other. Budd was a short, erect, stocky, lean man. He had an eye-glass, which was often the most important thing in his face. He had a tendency to fuss; he did not look too healthy; and wore good country clothes. He nursed his riding bowler, his riding gloves and the crop which he carried instead of a cane, as though they were reins. Frampton asked him if he would like a whisky and soda; he said he would, but his doctor had warned him off it for a bit, until after Christmas anyhow. He looked again at Tristan and Isolt.

"So you've come down to live in these parts?" he said at length.

Frampton said that he had.

The squire had never seen so many books in one room before; he looked in vain for the library edition of Surtees. Frampton said that it had been a lovely autumn. The squire said it had been the best he could remember, ever since shooting began.

"That's why I always like a fine spring," he said. "When it's a fine, dry spring, I know the shooting'll be good. The young birds grow up, and then you get what I really like, big coveys and all strong on the wing. Do you shoot?"

Frampton said that he did not shoot, but that he made guns and was accustomed to trying all his ideas with his own hands.

"Must be very interesting, making guns," the squire thought; he had had no knowledge of any of Frampton's inventions during the War, and did not know what they were like. To him, there were but two guns, for the killing of game, small and killing of game, big; to these might be added an occasional rook rifle.

"Are you a hunting man?" he asked.

Frampton said that he was not and would not be.

"We're mostly huntin' men in these parts," the squire said. "By the way, have you met Bynd yet? Peter Bynd? He used to be Master here; now he's secretary. He was going to write to you."

"Yes, I've had his letter," Frampton said.

"About Spirr Wood?"

"Yes."

"You'll excuse me asking about that," the squire said. "I've been connected with the Hunt here all my life, except when

I was in India. We always begin our season with a meet at Tibb's Cross, just below here, and then draw Spirr Wood. It's an old custom of the Hunt. Someone was saying, that you were going to preserve Spirr very strictly. I hope you aren't going to turn us out, what?"

"I am, though," Frampton said. "I'm making a kind of sanctuary for birds and beasts in Spirr; and though I've not really got going at it yet, and am only beginning with it, I don't want it disturbed. I wrote and explained all this to Sir Peter Bynd. I'm going over to see him to-morrow."

"I don't know what we should do, turned out of Spirr," the squire said. "I told Posh Tilter he ought to buy it, to make sure, when the Yocksirs were selling, but he took it for granted you'd be a hunting fellow. However, I hope Bynd'll persuade you; an awfully good fellow, Bynd; been here a long time; clever fellow."

"Are you fond of birds?" Frampton asked.

The squire said that he had always been fond of shooting.

"You must come out in the Spring with field-glasses," Frampton said. "I may have some birds worth watching, then."

"A sort of Nature study?" the squire said. "I've heard they do that kind of thing at some of the schools now. Fascinating thing, Nature, the more you study it. You never quite get to the bottom of it, do you?"

On this they parted. The squire's last looks at Tristan and Isolt remained in Frampton's memory for the rest of his life. However, he did not ask about them, shook hands and went, with some few words about the weather; and how steady the glass kept, in spite of all this cloud.

He went home, to report faithfully to his wife the conversation, and to accept from her reading of it the estimate of

Frampton which was to be the Budds' thenceforward. On the whole, Mrs. Budd judged it better, that that sort of man should not be asked into *Fletchings House*.

"If he's going to turn us out of Spirr, we can keep him out of our houses; that's the least we can do. Besides, a man living alone like that, with a lot of good-looking servants and indecent paintings on the walls, one does not know what to think. Anyhow, he is hardly the sort of man I'm accustomed to. I was talking to old Lady Maidy on Wednesday; she said she remembered the man's grandfather, who was a wild Red and in prison for it. She saw this fellow's father coming round with the bread-van. You've done all that is expected of you. You've left cards. He isn't going to shut us out of Spirr and then expect to be received. He may make guns and employ modernist painters, but he can't be a gentleman by instinct, or he wouldn't put us out of Spirr; and that he isn't one by birth we know too well."

She had a great fluency when roused. She spoke in this vein among her friends, some of whom were dining with her that night.

On the morrow, Frampton went over to lunch with Sir Peter and Lady Bynd, who had no knowledge of Mansell as yet, save by hearsay. Lady Bynd had prejudice; Sir Peter, who was a much wiser person, hoped to win him. Lady Bynd held and voiced the opinion that the county ought to be made too hot to hold him. Sir Peter, who had had dealings with many odd men in many odd and tight places, had come to know that a gentle method is often much more effective. He had caused him to be asked to lunch, and hoped that he might win him to his side.

They lived at *Coombe House*, a fine old brick manor, which had been built in the form of an E in the reign of Queen

Elizabeth. The central jut of the E had long since been removed; the house was some seven miles from *Mullples*, towards Wicked Hill.

Frampton entered the hall, which was hung with fox-masks, guards' coach-horns, "yards of tin," hunting-horns, racks for whips and crops, the head of a rhinoceros, and the swords and guns of seven generations of soldier-sportsmen. He was led past these along a passage decorated with paintings by Alken and by prints from the same artist; among these were some recent paintings of fox-terriers and hunters, including several of a white horse, plainly a favourite. The yap of dogs grew louder as he advanced. When he entered the room where his host and hostess waited, two little dogs rushed yapping at him. His hostess sat on a sofa with a lap-dog in her lap.

"I can't get up," she said. "I've got Diddums here."

Frampton shook hands with the pair and summed them up. The man was a big fellow, in very good, hard condition, with a look of great charm and sweetness of nature. The woman was a big woman, with "a face like an angry ham," as he defined it to himself. She wore expensive, ugly clothes, as prescribed by her dressmaker; there was no trace of personal choice in anything about her; it was all arranged, hair, eyebrows, nails. She remained "the angry ham" to him through life.

There were no books in the room, nor anything that could be read. Yet he felt sure that somewhere in the house there would be a study, where Sir Peter would have a great many pamphlets about new dressings for soils, William on the care of cider trees, Hawkins on the management of clay; books of farriery and kennel management; hound books and game books; the works of Surtees and Whyte-Melville; books of local history and archæology; perhaps even Drayton's *Polyolbion*

and certainly Somerville's *Chase*. His heart warmed to Sir Peter.

They went in to lunch in a big, lofty room hung three deep with family portraits of the Bynds. Frampton cast a shrewd glance at them, and judged them as a very poor lot; no good painting among them. The lunch began; it was a very good lunch, with excellent wine. The conversation was not easy, because the angry ham was not a charming hostess to guests of whom she disapproved. When the port was passed, Sir Peter said:

"I ought not to ask you this, Mr. Mansell, for you have already refused us; but it is a question about which we feel deeply. Is there any hope of your relenting about Spirr Covert?"

"No, really none; I'm going to be adamant," Frampton said.

"You're a great birdist, somebody was saying, and keen about bringing back bitterns and so forth," he went on. "I expect you will know my cousin, Jim Bynd, who has the hoopoes nesting in his garden each year."

"No, I do not know him," Frampton said.

Sir Peter had made his opening and was about to develop it, when the lady intervened with a little grit for the bearings.

"What I cannot understand, Mr. Mansell," she said, "is how a visit of the hounds in November could disturb your birds; they won't be game-birds and they can't be nesting then."

"Ah," he answered, "I want the wood to be for wild animals as well as for birds. That is why I want the hounds away. I want the place to be a shelter."

"What do you reckon as wild animals?" she asked.

"There aren't too many, are there?" he answered. "Foxes, otters, squirrels, weasels, possibly pine martens, dormice; it isn't a long list."

"But a lot of those are vermin," she said. "They oughtn't to be sheltered; they ought to be shot."

"By gamekeepers, perhaps; but I'm not a gamekeeper. I don't call them vermin. I call them very beautiful, clever things, of enormous interest."

"I say, I shan't love you, Mr. Mansell, if you go bringing otters here. I've got a trout hatch, you know," Sir Peter said.

"Otters are great rovers," Frampton said. "They would be hard to keep in one place. The beast I would really love to introduce would be the beaver."

This was the beginning of the final damnation of Frampton Mansell in all that countryside. He spoke out of a genuine wish to fulfil the thought of Margaret, now in her grave; but it fell like a spark into the fuming gas of his hostess.

"I would love to have beavers in the valley in Spirr," he said.

"But really, Mr. Mansell," the lady said, "the Government has just had to go to quite enormous expense in putting down beavers. They have got into the river-banks and are destroying them everywhere to an extent the papers say must be seen to be believed. Surely you aren't going to bring in more?"

"Beavers?" he asked. "Where are there beavers in England?"

"But all down the Severn, destroying all the banks."

"Surely you mean musk-rats?"

"Aren't they the same as beavers, destructive to the banks?"

"No, no. Beavers are quiet beasts, who build dams. I can send you a book about them, which will quite change your views about them."

"No, no, please; I don't want to know more about them than I do at present."

"I fear you don't know anything about them at present."

"I know more than enough. I do not believe in introducing wild animals to a country like this."

"But not long ago, the Hunt here introduced a lot of German foxes," he said.

"I know nothing about that; and in any case foxes are different."

"In what way are they different?"

"They are not destructive like beavers and these other things."

"But they are," Frampton said. "They are very destructive. I met an old man, a day or two ago, who had had three of his twelve hens taken by a fox. He said he might get a shilling a head for them, from the Hunt, if he kept at it long enough, but that he was not going to be bullied and badgered and have his word doubted; he was going to shoot every fox he could see from that day forth."

"Of course," the lady said, "if a man does not keep his hens properly shut up or looked after, a fox is sure to get them."

"It is not possible for a poor man to watch his hens as a shepherd would watch his flock," Frampton said. "He has other things to do. Foxes are destructive beasts, kept alive here so that people can hunt them. I think that the people who hunt them and want them should either protect folk from the results, in supplying wire-netting to poor poultry-keepers, or meet claims for damage with generosity."

"I quite agree, Mr. Mansell," Sir Peter said, "I quite agree. I've been shocked to find some Hunts mean in those ways. I hope, and indeed feel sure, that the old man you mention was not anyone near here."

"No, no; miles away," Frampton said.

"I've found that some poor chaps are afraid to push their claims," Sir Peter said. "It is sometimes hard to find out who has suffered. But, by Jove, some farmers are up to every dodge, and would ruin the Bank of England in claims."

In my young days, I knew of a claim for a young giraffe."

"Killed by the foxes?" Frampton asked.

"No, dead of a nervous strain from seeing the hounds. He was in a private zoo, and we were just outside the fences. Certainly, the hounds made the beast caper very oddly, but it looked to me more like joy than terror. Anyhow, it died soon afterwards and the owner claimed. He did not win, of course. Hunting is like every other great pleasure, it may make people who are having it a bit inconsiderate."

Frampton warmed to the man, who was a fine fellow, generous, brave, simple and kind-hearted. Sir Peter, on his side, felt that there was much in Frampton, and that he could win him, if he could only find some piece of mental ground on which they could walk together.

"I wonder," he said to his wife, "I wonder, my dear, if we cannot together make Mr. Mansell our friend sufficiently to change his views about Spirr. Now, Mr. Mansell is a friend to animals; he is, therefore, a friend of man, and will probably class fox-hunters as men. You will go so far as that, Mr. Mansell?"

"Ay, in the catalogue, ye go for men," Frampton quoted, but neither hearer knew what he meant.

"We have many of the infirmities of men," Sir Peter said; "for instance, we of the Tunsters hold very much by our traditions. George the Second granted us a Hunt button; he dined with us once and praised our punch. We drink the same punch to his memory at our Dinner every year. But our great tradition is the day from Spirr Wood, when we found in Spirr in the morning and hunted the fox all day long for over twenty miles and lost him near Spirr in the evening. He went right out to Wicked Hill and then all the way back again. Five horses were killed during the hunt, two from falls and three

others ridden dead. Two men, the Huntsman and John Bynd; Happy John, they called him; that's his portrait in the grey velvet coat; were up when the hounds lost him. They had been lucky in getting remounts. We have kept up the memory of the Spirr Wood Day ever since. We have a song, which we sing at our Dinners and Balls; that, too, is old, dating from about 1789. We have also a most interesting account of the whole day. The Master, then the John Bynd I spoke of, went to the trouble of persuading everybody who was out that day to write an account of what he saw and did. More than that, he went to the very great trouble of collecting the reports of eye-witnesses from all over the line the fox took; so that it is unique; there's nothing like it. He had it printed, with some drawings by the painter Sartorius, who does those long-legged horses, you may know the kind of thing. The book is very rare now, but I'll show you a copy. It is very interesting, for many of those who were out could hardly write their names, but dictated what they saw. The original letters are all in my study at this moment. I'll be happy to show them to you, if you're at all interested. I believe I'm right in claiming that the Spirr Wood run is one of the longest recorded runs. It is our great day, and we do treasure the tradition of drawing Spirr on our opening day.

"Now I've talked a great deal about Spirr, and I'm afraid bored you dreadfully, but what I want to lead up to is whether, now that you know the feelings, or even the passions, involved, you will not think about putting your bird sanctuary somewhere else, and letting the Hunt buy Spirr from you?"

"I'm sorry," Frampton said. "The place has associations for me, which go deep."

He stopped a moment, thinking how deep they went, and wondering whether Margaret would have advised him to

accept this offer, not to be churlish and stand out against what people so much wanted. He liked this hunting man; he was a very fine, simple fellow; but then, he did not like the fellow's wife, with the face like the angry ham and the folly about the musk-rats and the beavers. She had not made him welcome there. She had shown him plainly that he was there on sufferance, against her will. He thought at once that his dead love would have told him to agree with the adversary and let the covert go. Then he thought, no, she wouldn't; she loathed fox-hunting, and despised its followers: "grown-up people," she said said, "running a poor fox to death." She had planned to make the wood a sanctuary, and it now was one. She had much enjoyed the thought of it, and loved the sight of it. Perhaps some of her last thoughts on earth had been of it and about it. Then he thought of Posh Tilter and hardened his heart. Never should they draw Spirr.

The lady said, with bitter and evil intention: "I had not understood that you had associations nearer than Condicote."

"Those were my father's," he answered. "My father came from there. I do not know the place much. But for Spirr Wood, I have very deep feeling."

He knew that the lady had wished him to know, that she and everybody there knew, that his grandfather had been a baker in Condicote. He decided that the lady had ruined the Hunt's chance of ever having a fox from the covert in time to come. He resolved to hit back in a way that would make them squirm; he did so.

"Another thing I've thought of doing presently," he said, though the matter had only at that moment floated into his mind, "is to develop all this countryside as building sites. Tatchester is an appalling city from every point of view. The Cathedral has its points, of course, but apart from the Close,

there isn't a decent house in the place. Now out by Spirr, and along by *Mullples*, there are wonderful views and lovely country. What I want to do, and I'm sure you'll welcome the idea, is to build a couple of hundred red brick villas, just to the east of Spirr, grouped round a cinema; for that is the modern centre of any community, the cinema; you can hardly have the one without the other. Don't you think that that would be a God-send for the poor chaps who have to live in Tatchester? They could come out on their motor-bikes after work and enjoy themselves. Or we could have three or four of these big red charries to bring them. Don't you think that that would be a good thing?"

He knew that he had dealt them a deadly thrust apiece; with his best poker face he watched their misery and rage. The lady's face gave him acute pleasure. She had been hardly able to contain her indignation with him hitherto; now she boiled over.

"Surely, Mr. Mansell," she began, "surely, Mr. Mansell, you are not seriously thinking of desecrating this wonderful part of England?"

"Desecrating?" he said. "Really, no; I would never desecrate. I like buildings, and I like this country. I only want to give a lot of poor chaps a chance of enjoying it."

"Enjoying it? Mr. Mansell, but they wouldn't enjoy it as we should."

"Very likely not; I hope not; for they are very different sort of people, but they would enjoy it, I don't doubt."

"Yes, at the expense of everybody else."

"No, at my expense; but the scheme would be self-supporting."

"You know what I mean, Mr. Mansell; it would be at the expense of everybody who cares for this countryside."

It has been kept hitherto by people who love it."

"Wouldn't you rather that it were lived in henceforth by people who love it."

"Those people you talk of bringing wouldn't love it. They would bring the slum spirit here. And they would not thank you; they would do nothing but growl, even if you gave them the houses rent free. A great deal is done for the poor; a very great deal too much, if you ask me; and they've got into the way now of expecting a great deal and giving nothing in return for what they have. They get an education free, which they don't value and don't really want. They leave school, and they turn up their noses at the work that is offered to them, at good wages, in the districts they know. I speak here with authority, Mr. Mansell, for I have to try to get maids and cooks here, and I cannot get them. I have found it much easier and a great deal more satisfactory to go to the trouble of getting maids from Sweden and Norway, who come over here for a year to learn English. I can't get English maids, though I offer them twice and three times the wages the same maids got in my mother's house. The young women will not take indoor service. What they want is to be free for the day at half-past five, and to go to a cinema with a young man; and then on Sunday to drive off with him on a motor-bicycle to the other side of the county."

"I'm only a bachelor," he said. "My housekeeper does most of that kind of thing for me. We haven't had any trouble yet. Most of my servants have been with me for years. Servants take a world of trouble off one's shoulders, and it's a troublous kind of job, so they ought to have as good a time as one can afford, don't you think? I think it all lies in that; giving them plenty of time to be absolutely theirs, and also a fair share of one's own good time."

This was not at all the doctrine to which Lady Bynd was accustomed, from her parents, her pulpit, her daily paper and her own persuasion. Sir Peter was distressed to see the bearings running hot. Mansell had risen to go. He tried hard to bring the talk to a gentler level.

"It is the swing of the pendulum," he said. "People were too much repressed, and now are a little too much for themselves. They'll come back to the old loyalties. But, Mr. Mansell, you'll forgive me for harping so on my one string of Spirr Wood. I realise that you have deep feelings about the covert, so, if you cannot make us happy, I hope that your sanctuary will give you much happiness. But, if you ever should change your mind, will you remember the Tunsters, who drink still to George the Second?"

"I have a receipt for a punch of that time," Frampton said. "I'll send it to you, if you'd like that. I must keep Spirr as a bird place. If in the Spring you would care to see the birds, I hope you will come to see them. I hope to have some then."

This was meant as a friendly ending to the meeting. He showed his sympathy with the Tuncesters, to the extent of sending them a receipt for a punch; showed that he was going to be adamant about Spirr, and also showed them that he recognised that they would not be friends, and indeed belonged in opposite camps, but that what he had to share with them, a knowledge and love of birds, he would share, if they wished, to the full. He turned to say good-bye to his hostess, who was not content to end on a low note.

She had been brought up to having her own way without much opposition. She had learned, in the England of her girlhood, to ride over those who were not in her set, nor of her way of thinking; she was determined to ride over Frampton.

"It must be very interesting to you," she said, "to come here, so near to your father's old home."

"It is interesting to see a new bit of England," he said, "and study the savage inhabitants, and the dear old ruins of the eighteenth century, pretending to be what they were. England is always interesting."

She affected not to see his hand, so he put it in his pocket.

"I don't know what guns you make," she said; "they may be very fine or they may not. Opinions differ. But if I know anything of the youth of these parts, your absurd scheme of a bird sanctuary will not prosper very far. And I must say, I hope it won't. And if you try your plan of jerry-building, I'll see what the Ministries can do."

"It's always a fresh surprise, isn't it?" he said, "what the Ministries will do. One of them's rather keen on having a machine-gun range and school just up above here. I tell them it's just the place. I do hope they'll establish it. I could try my new quick-firer at my own door, so to speak." Seeing that he had touched her to the quick, he went on. "I've grown to loathe the quiet and the dry rot up on the Waste," he said. "Haven't you? Don't you long to train quick-firers on Stubbington Wood, to blast some of those old sick trees away?"

Lady Bynd had never learned to spit and did not now attempt it; she drew herself up, looking liker an angry ham than before. Frampton heard the remark "insufferable" as he went through the door. Sir Peter followed him out to the car to see him away. Frampton wanted to be nice to Sir Peter, who had been very nice to him.

"If you'd like to bring your Boy Scouts out to *Mullples* at any time," he said, "I'll fix up a water picnic for them, with coracles, and a punt or two, and, of course, I'll have a bathing-place for them." . .

He drove away, then, thinking that he had done for himself in that house, and a jolly good job.

Lady Bynd presently put on a fur coat and was driven to her friend, Mrs. Method-Methodde at Stubbington Manor. There Mrs. Method-Methodde gave her tea and listened to her woes.

"What do you think of *Mullples*? My dear, isn't it too ghastly? There is this dreadful gun-man, for I can call him nothing else, taking Spirr Wood from us out of sheer spite, and saying he's going to make it a bird sanctuary. He only does it out of spite. We've met him; he lunched with us to-day. I shall never feel clean again. My dear, he is too awful. He speaks of building two hundred red brick villas and cinemas just above Spirr, so as to absolutely ruin our view. Pit was an angel to him; you know how charming he can be. I was for horse-whipping him there and then. Pit pleaded with the brute for Spirr Wood. Any decent man or half decent man would have yielded to the way Pit put it; but this creature kept saying that he had very deep feelings involved. He would not tell us what they were; naturally not; he hadn't got any; it was only a pretence. A minute later, he said he was going to put his Gun Works on the Waste. My dear, do you realise that that man's grandfather was a baker at Condicote, who was in Tatchester prison for assaulting a judge? He was. And his father kept a meat-pie store in Stanchester. It is altogether too ghastly. And now that poor Charlie is laid out, unable to ride, our only hope is for continued frost to make us not mind it, for the hunting season is ruined as far as this side of the country is concerned. He is an odious-looking man, with a black, cynical eye, which I always call an evil eye. There he is at *Mullples*. I said how difficult it is to get servants. He said that he left all that to a housekeeper. Such insolence. Not much housekeeper in the Condicote menage, I imagine. He

said that he always kept his maids; that they had nice rooms and books and a wireless set, as well as a great deal of leave. Millie says he takes them to Brighton for the week-ends. Now, there he'll be. Absolutely killing hunting on all our side of the country."

A young man who went by the name of Pob roused from his seat on the sofa as the lady finished her tirade. He was a leader of the B.Y.T. Club, the Bright Young Things Club, which functioned mainly in London, but had ramifications into that part of the country. He was the son of Mrs. Method-Methodde and the idol (and anxiety) of her heart.

"The chaps seems a bit of a bounder, I must say," he said. "A bit of one."

"I wish you'd seen him; I wish you'd heard him," the lady answered.

"I suppose he's made a good deal of tin," Pob said. "These gun chaps and armament fellows, they do pretty well, what? I mean to say, they make a lot. Lots of tin in that job. He must be devilish well off."

"Of course he has a lot of money. All these War profiteers have; nobody denies that. He makes you realise what is meant by the old phrase 'Stinks of money.' He has this offensive leer out of his eyes. And he looks at the pictures exactly as if he'd been a pawnbroker's assistant, or valuer. He had the insolence to say that our Sir Joshua Reynolds was only by one of the school of. And the maid was in the room, and you know we want to sell it, if we can find some rich American. It will get about that it is not genuine, and everybody has always called it a Joshua Reynolds."

"Thus the sweet charmer warbled o'er the main."

Pob lit a cigarette.

"By Jove," he said, "he seems a bit of a bounder. Is it true he's not going to let us draw Spirr?"

"It's absolutely true. For the first time for a hundred and fifty years. Even in the War years, some of us went through Spirr, just to keep the tradition alive."

"By Jove," Pob said.

"Just as he left," the lady added, "he said he hoped Pit would bring the Boy Scouts out to his pond for a water picnic. Imagine those boys coming under such an influence. But with gun-works on the Waste and two hundred Tatchester unemployed in villas along the hill, Pit might just as well disband the troop."

"As to the gun-works," she went on, "I'll speak to Ponk about it. He'll get it taken up in the Press. Perhaps Pink might ask a question in the House. But certainly Ponk could do something about the red brick villas."

Ponk was the owner of a group of newspapers in those parts; Pink was Mr. Methodde; all the friends of these people went by nicknames, most of them beginning with the letter P.

"I shouldn't think many people near here will call on this gunman," Lady Bynd said. "My dear, his manners are too odious. I feel in need of ammonia."

She spread the news, and her views, of the gunman by letter, in person and on the telephone. On the Friday, Frampton drove to Tatchester Station to meet his father, who was coming from London for the week-end. The London Express, which reached Tatchester at 4 p.m., was always full of people from that countryside; the station approach was always thronged with cars sent to fetch them, and the platform populous with those who came to meet and to greet them. When Frampton came to the crowded platform, to meet the train, he saw at

once that he was recognised, and with dislike. Press photographs and caricatures had made his face familiar to some millions of his countrymen. These people, who read little but illustrated newspapers, all recognised him. He realised that he was amidst the sporting set, and those hard mouths and angry eyes were set in rage at the bounder who had closed Spirr. There was no doubt, he was being stared at, with bitter comment. He knew the kind of comment, that this was the gunman who had done up *Mullples* and was going to shoot any fox or hound that ever entered Spirr; this was he who insulted Lady Bynd and meant to build red brick villas all over Mullples Hill; who had atheists to paint nudes all over his walls and took his housemaids to Brighton for the week-end.

"Yes, I'm the chap," he muttered. "Take a good look, my hard-eyed duds."

Among them he noticed a tall young man whose eyes and hat were somehow tilted at different angles; he was with a very fair, tall girl, who was smoking a cigarette in a holder. They looked a fairly tough couple, he thought; he judged that they either were, or were dressed to resemble, a bad film star and her lizard. They were Pob and his girl friend, known as Brass-Eyed Sarah. He was close to them. Brass-Eyed Sarah, in a very brazen voice, said:

"That's the bounder who's going to close Spirr."

She was one of the brightest of the Bright Young Things. The train came in at that moment. While waiting to pilot his old father through the doors of the station, he heard himself pointed out and commented on by several others. Some of the remarks by the women were meant for him to hear; he heard them. He hardened his heart exceedingly.

In the next week or two, it became clear to him that he was not to find many friends in that countryside. He was away

for the greater part of each week, devising his new gun. In his absence, between Monday and Friday night, a few men, knowing that he would be away, left cards upon him. He returned these calls, but found that by some coincidence the people were never at home when he returned the calls; the acquaintance was not made. He did not much wish to make the acquaintance, but marvelled a little at the people troubling to leave cards, if they meant the acquaintance not to be made.

"But," he thought, "it is a thing they do, and feel bound to do. They will say: 'Of course, I left cards on the bounder, when he came to these parts; one has to do that, of course; but I took good care not to be in when he came here; a fearful feller like that.'"

After two weeks, he was surprised to find that his chance remarks about the villas at *Coombe House* had been taken seriously. There were two letters in the *Tatshire Times* under the heading "Beauty Spot Threatened." One letter, written in the office, so Frampton judged, said that they had heard with alarm that a new-comer to the district had plans of building red brick villas on the matchless slope of Mullples Hill; the second, by some female hand, presumably Lady Bynd, who had no doubt had Ponk to lunch, called on all loyal lovers of Britain to defend their birthright.

"Her birthright," Frampton muttered. "The view from her Strawberry Hill Gothic windows. She's related to the chap who owns this screed. I heard someone say. Well, I'll lead her a dance over it."

There was in Tatchester, an opposition paper to the *Tatshire Times*. The *Tatshire Times* was a good old weekly Church and State Tory paper, supporting the landed interest and all those commercial interests by which the landed interests keep going. It believed in "the strong hand" in India, Ireland and

native questions generally; it felt and said that strikers in industrial disputes did not know which side their bread was buttered, even when it was plainly not buttered on either side. It had a good many subscribers, and was used by local tradesmen who advertised in it constantly. In the last two years, an opposition weekly paper known as "a rag," or "a red rag," by the supporters of the *Tatshire Times*, had been established in Tatchester. This was the *Tatshire Change*. It was run very ably in the Labour interest, and was making its way. It had already taken nearly a third of the subscribers and a fifth of the advertisements from the *Tatshire Times*, and many tradesmen, who had at first feared to advertise in it, lest they should lose custom, were beginning to pluck up heart and consider whether they should not make a change.

Frampton had no "Labour leanings," as his neighbours supposed; he hated revolutionaries as much as he hated Tories; his business was to make guns and sell them, in doing which Labour papers were as troublesome to him as Tory Colonels in high places. He disliked inefficiencies, found them in all ranks and was intolerant of them everywhere. The wandering Devil, who was never far from his elbow when there was a chance of gratifying one of his angers, now prompted him to rouse the troubled waters a little more.

"Since she believes in these red brick villas," he thought, "we'll see if we can't make her squirm."

Just at that moment the telephone rang; it was the *Tatshire Change* speaking, to ask if he had anything to say about his proposed scheme of building on the Mullples Hill.

He had a moment of much happiness. He asked, if anything had yet been written in the *Tatshire Change*. The editor replied:

"No, we have no information, beyond the letters in

the *Toast & Tea*." (The local nickname for their rival.)

"Very well, then," he answered. "I don't want to talk over the telephone, for over a telephone a man's words may be all misreported. I'm going to my Works now. If you care to come with me and see the Works, I'll be glad to talk about it."

This was too good a chance for the editor to miss. He came with Frampton to London, saw the Works, and heard his views. In a few days, just as the *Tatshire Times* was culling the flowers from the crop of correspondence about "the spoliation of Mullples beauty spot," as they meant to call it, the *Tatshire Change* came out with a long article, and placarded it all over the city.

HOPE OF HOMES FOR HEROES MR. MANSELL EXPLAINS HIS NOBLE SCHEME

There was a run on the *Tatshire Change*; it sold three editions before midnight. The buyers read the following:

"With reference to the letters which have appeared in a local contemporary, and fittingly on the back page, which is being behind the times, even for Tatshire, about some proposed building on Mullples or Abbey Hill, in this county, a member of our staff sends the following account of an interview with Mr. Mansell, the owner of the property in question:

"I saw Mr. Mansell to-day by appointment at his works in East London, where he is busily engaged in perfecting the details of his much-improved light machine-gun, which is said to be likely to revolutionise warfare. He received me in his office, which was hung with the trophies of his handicraft.

"'You have come to ask about the suggested building on Mullples Hill?' he said. 'Well, ask away. But first, let me ask you, do you know Mullples Hill?'"

"'We said, yes, we saw it daily, if the weather were at all clear."

"'Very well,' he said; 'do you often go there?'"

"'We said, no, we have never been there.'"

"'Very well,' he said; 'do you know anybody who does go there?'"

"'No, we said, we knew nobody who went or even had been there, but probably many local people had been there at one time or another."

"'Very well, then,' he said. 'If many go there, they would leave traces, is not that so?'"

"'We said, yes, they would leave traces."

"'Very well, then,' he replied. 'Let me tell you that there are no traces, or practically none. The nearest road to the hill passes at its foot, quite half a mile from the top. There is no lane, no track, no path leading up it. It is a lonely, deserted, barren hill, very steep in places, and covered on all its western slopes with a thicket of white and black thorn, elder, bramble and stunted oak; it is a jungle of weed and diseased wood growing on the poorest soil of the Waste. It is a part of Stubbington Great Wood, in fact, where all the trees are stunted. Primitive man neglected it, because it is overlooked from Stubbington Hills behind it. Picnic parties and view admirers neglect it for the same reason. I have examined the whole of Mullples Hill for signs of human use and interest. At the top, in a shallow depression, were the remains of two picnic fires, one ancient, the other possibly of last August. In one part of the wood, in a shelter under a bank, there is the trace of a tramp's camp; a man was there

with his doxy during the summer, and left ashes, a can, a bottle, a boot and the ruins of a corset. There are at the moment marks of horses' hoofs on the turf of the hill; the local Hunt has been what they call cubbing, which I trust they will omit in future. That is how man uses the hill at present; two tramps, two picnic-parties and the cubbers, in the finest recorded summer.

"Now for the next point, the possible spoiling of beauty. . . . A newspaper says in its affiche BEAUTY SPOT THREATENED. I say that until the newspaper did this no one thought it a beauty spot. Who calls it a beauty spot? Those who live on the spot? No one does live on the spot. My household and I are the nearest to it. We regard it as a derelict part of the estate, in need of the work of many men. You may say that the dwellers in the district near-by think it a beauty spot. I say that they do not. They could have bought it dirt cheap at any time these three years and never lifted a finger. If they had thought it a beauty spot, would they not have tried to buy it, if not for the Nation at least for themselves and their little clan of beauty-lovers? They never made an offer; the owner told me so himself. If they had thought it a beauty spot, would they not have had it painted? Would they not have had it photographed? They did neither. I defy you to show me any painting or picture post-card of the hill or any part of the hill done within the last fifteen years.

"This beauty spot has been left to the rabbits and the tramps, save perhaps twice a year, when some of the dwellers in the district come on horseback to it, to drive a poor, wretched fox from his kennel, so that they may hunt him to his death in the valley. These see their sport, as they call it, threatened. A few of these same folk, the land-owners,

game preservers and fox-hunters, who have been very well content all their lives to keep the hill in its present derelict condition, suddenly see something else threatened. Some of them, as I know, own a good deal of very vile slum property in the near-by towns of Tatchester and Stubbington. They are suddenly scared, lest decent homes should be built on Mullples, and their vile rookeries, those homes for heroes, depreciated. That is the real reason of the outcry. . . .

"'Beauty spot threatened, quotha. . . . Vested interest threatened. Mullples Hill is not a beauty spot. It is a neglected, derelict, barren piece of waste. I am determined to make it better, either as a place of pleasure or a place of business. I mean to make it a "Beauty Spot."

"I dislike the phrase "Beauty Spot," and much dislike the talk of such things. Generally speaking, most of Earth, left to Nature is beautiful. Man has to interfere with Nature, and does so often with greedy and savage mind. In few lands has he been greedier and savager than here. This land is dotted with festering and stinking scrap-heaps called towns and industrial centres. Any man is allowed to make a new scrap-heap of a town anywhere if he can persuade people that he can make money by doing so.

"I have lately restored an old house of great beauty which the local beauty-lovers were allowing to drop into the brook. I think the place beautiful, and would like to make the near-by wastes beautiful. Why, therefore, should I not bring some of my workers here, reclaim the wastes, and make my new gun close to my own doors? Why should I not make Mullples Hill my centre?

"A man, like a community, must have a centre. My work is the main fact about me. My works would be the centre of Mullples Village, which I should call St. Margarets.

In the primitive times, the centre of the community was the fort or the stronghold; then, later, it may have been the shrine or holy image; later still, the church. Nowadays, I say that the usual centre is the cinema. I propose to have two cinemas. But the main centre will be the Works.

"I believe that a great deal of poppycock is talked and written about economic rents and so forth. I believe that it will be possible to build a charming village there, and to let the houses to men working in Tatchester some dozen miles away. Many of them have motor-cycles; but for the others I should propose to run a motor-bus service several times a day, if I can get the necessary licence. If I cannot, it will be very interesting to show the public why I cannot.

"Now I may recapitulate. The hill has been disregarded since the flood. It shows no mark of primitive occupation; it cannot be cultivated; it would not keep six sheep on the whole of it. The fox-hunters who find it such a beauty spot suddenly, surely cannot object to fifty or a hundred fellow-mortals coming there to enjoy its beauty close to. I am loath to offend the sense of beauty of fox-hunters, who have, as is well known, filled England with beautiful public buildings and works of art. Their kennels and stables attract art-lovers from all over the world. I will, therefore, promise that my designs for my village and its centres shall be publicly displayed in London before the building begins. If anything in the designs offends the sense of beauty of any fox-hunter or landowner in the district, I will demand that he shall produce a better, to be approved a better by a committee of artists and architects, French, American and English.

"I hope that the game-preservers who have started this agitation against my plan will have the grace to admit that some buildings do add to the beauty of landscape. Few can

deny the charm and grace of some Italian hill towns, and Spanish villages; of the French château or church; and of the American country house. If they will not admit any such thing, then, I can only hope that they will suspend judgment for five years, by which time the young men of St. Margarets will, I hope, be able to challenge them at cricket, swimming, free-hand drawing, painting, sculpture, smithery and choral singing.’”

The interview was printed. It was a dead season, and the question of Mullples came happily to the Editor's hand. Frampton had so planted his hooks that a gudgeon of sorts came on to each one. The next day, a party of Press photographers, a member of the Save England Society, and some twenty amateur photographers came out to Mullples in different cars and ways, and took many views. The fat was in the fire.

Unfortunately, the opposition pitted against him, the local landowners, were not clever with their pens; they did not write to the Press. Ponk saw to it that the *Tatshire Times* printed a leader on the question, in which “we” deplored the tendency to decentralisation, which was surely contrary to all economic experience. “We” did not doubt that Mr. Mansell had the good of the country much at heart, but were sure that they were voicing local sentiment when they said that Tatshire men had been accustomed to manage their own affairs, as well as to preserve unspoiled the beauty bequeathed to them by the piety of their forefathers.

This leader was followed up by a correspondence, some of it written in the office, signed Pro Bono Publico and Tatshire Man, the rest of it from Tatshire people, who wrote on both sides of the question much as follows:

"As one who has enjoyed many delightful picnics on Mullples Hill, I should like to ask whether Squatter's Rights might not be invoked to prevent the threatened vandalism? I am not, unfortunately, in a good position financially, but should be glad to contribute my widow's mite up to half a crown to defend what God meant to be for everyone. Vox Populi."

The *Tatshire Change* printed the following letter, among others:

"As one who was born within sight of Mullples Hill, one of a family of eleven, my father being a labourer earning twelve shillings a week, and paying one and sixpence out of that for a cottage which had only two rooms, one of which let in the rain through roof and walls, having been used as a pigsty by a former tenant, I say God speed Mr. Mansell, who plans to build beautiful homes there. As the bugs are very bad in the gentleman-owned house in which I live at present, I hope that I may be one of the favoured few to dwell there. It will be like living in the New Jerusalem. Bolshie and Proud of It."

One of Ponk's adherents replied to this as follows:

"One of my most treasured possessions is a withered dog-rose plucked by my little daughter Annie on the threatened hill, a week before her unexpected murder by a motor-car. I confess it would wring my heart cruelly to think that the scene of her last gambols was to be desecrated with 'Bricks and Mortar.' Broken-Hearted."

Altogether the Press comment was lively, and sometimes sufficiently foolish to be quoted in the London Press as specimens of what we can do in that way.

Many little things had shown Fram, by this time, that he was to be cut by the sportsmen in those parts, and that none but sportsmen dwelled there; his father had been wise in that, as in so many things.

"Never mind," he thought, "I can make my presence here felt by the fox-hunters, and by Jove I will."

The thought of the angry ham returned to him daily, to harden his heart. But mixed with his loathing for her was an agony of rage at the injustice, that Margaret had been taken and that thing left. That hurt him cruelly, and in his pain he longed to hurt others.

"Oh to have a machine-gun range on all the Waste, to kill the Hunt utterly, and put that damned ham's neck out of joint. Oh, to have a factory and a model village, from here to Coombe, so that the Tatchester slums may be done for, and a new generation grow up in clean air."

But he cared less for the new generation really than for the ground landlords, the game-preservers, with the empty slums on their hands, and forced, perhaps, to apply at his Works for jobs. That would be a sweet moment. Margaret's death had killed the life of his heart; there was no joy there now, only bitterness and a longing to give bitterness.

A local saddler, hoping for his custom, sent him a fixture-card of the Hunt. He read:

"Wednesday (the opening day), Tibb's Cross, 11 a.m.

Friday, Trumpet Inn, 11 a.m.

Saturday (bye day), Stubbington Market, 11 a.m."

"Meet at Tibb's Cross, will they?" he commented. "Well, they'd better not try to get into Spirr Wood."

He could not keep them from Tibb's Cross, the crossing-point of the two lanes just beyond his property, but he was resolved to keep them from the field which led to Spirr. He, therefore, went down to examine the gate which led from his field into the lane at Tibb's Cross. It was a new gate, put in by him. He chained and padlocked the gate. Later, feeling that he had not secured it sufficiently, he went down with some barbed wire and added the wire to the chain.

"That'll keep 'em their own side of the fence," he thought.

He looked at the fir-trees at the end of Spirr. As ever, they brought to him a poignant thought of Margaret.

"These fox-hunters want to draw your wood," he said, "but I'll keep 'em out, my dear. I think I've fixed 'em."

This was on the Tuesday.

He would have gone to London that night, to be at the Works on the opening morning of the Hunt, but on his return to the house, he found a call from a ship at sea. A young American inventor whom he had met while in the States, was about to land at Southampton, and would much like to stop for a talk as he drove through to North Wales. He liked this young man, who had charm, a tireless energy, and a keen swift intelligence in all matters relating to guns and explosives.

"Certainly, I must see George," he said. "He may enjoy seeing this place. He'll be able to come here for the night."

He, therefore, urged him to come to *Mullples* on landing, and gave him some directions about how to get there. He then telephoned through to the Works, to say that he wouldn't be up till Thursday morning, and that if anything pressed for a decision, they could telephone.

George arrived late on Tuesday night, and after a midnight supper, went to bed. In the morning, the two breakfasted together and talked about a new idea. Frampton had liked the young man, and now liked him better. He was a fine fellow, with a mental habit of getting at essentials by short cuts. His race has this habit or power beyond all the races of the world. In appearance, he was a fine big fellow, handsome, active and with an air of command. He had a shock of black hair, worn rather long, plenty of colour in his cheeks, and vivid black eyes. He got a great deal of enjoyment out of life and showed it.

They talked for a full hour after breakfast; then Frampton showed him the house. Again, he was delighted by the young man's power of enjoyment. He loved the fair old house, and the modern work upon it. He loved the frescoes and the grace and colour of Frampton's gear.

"Well, come out for a bit, and see the 'grounds,' " Frampton said, "or rather, see the waters, for they are the chief beauties."

They walked up the brook to the lake; some wild duck went up from before them, and at the lake's end a heron rose and slowly flapped away.

"Those are the birds they used to hawk at," Frampton said; "the heron would rise in great rings, and the hawk would rise, too, to try to get above him."

"Gee," the youth said, "I'd like to see some falconing. I never have."

"I might try it here," Frampton said. "But my chief interest here is going to be a bird sanctuary, a little farther down the valley."

"Say," the young man said, "have you got a bird sanctuary? Would you show it to me? Gee, I'd like to see that. And can

you show me your English birds? Can you show me a robin red breast?"

A robin was in sight at that moment; Frampton pointed it out.

"When I was a kid," the young man explained, "I'd a book with pictures of robins burying the babes in the wood."

"Come down the valley," Frampton said. "I'll show you the wood, such as it is. There'll be birds about, of course, and you'll see them now that the leaves are off, but we'd better call at the house for glasses. Don't expect much of a show."

They walked down towards the house. Moving slowly down hill, parallel with them in the lane which skirted Frampton's property on that side was a solitary horseman. At a point where he passed a gate they saw that he was in scarlet.

"Who's the guy in red?" the young man asked.

Frampton remembered suddenly that it was the opening meet.

"It's a hunter, of sorts," he said. "There'll be others."

Looking about, he saw others coming down the hill; two men in rat-catcher, a woman on a grey, a man in a dark coat piloting three little girls on ponies.

"I'd forgotten about that," Frampton said. "It's what they call the opening meet of the hunting season here. They're fox-hunters. They meet at a cross-roads just below there. Like to see 'em?"

"I sure would," the young man said. "I've heard tell about fox-hunters, and when I was a kid, I'd a book about them. They don't do it in my part of the States. Any hunting in my part gets done with a gun."

Frampton looked at his watch.

"We're late," he said. "They'll be off. But we'll get glasses

and see something. As a matter of fact, I want to see what they do."

They quickened their pace; it was twenty-past eleven. Frampton went into the hall of *Mullples* and picked up two pairs of glasses from a table there. He led the way up the slope to the summer-house from which Margaret and he had first seen Spirr. As he walked, he heard some of the customary noises of a meet, the peculiar bark with which a hunt-servant speaks to hounds, the tuneful yelp of a hound getting, or expecting, correction, and the movements of a good many motor-cars and the tinkle of bicycle-bells.

Before they reached the summer-house, the sun came out; they looked down on a transfigured scene. Plainly, the Tunsters had rallied to the opening meet; the countryside was full of people. The lanes were populous with riders and with cars trying to get past them. Riders, in scarlet or black or rat-catcher, were slowly moving along to what they thought might be good places. There were country people together at every gate and stile. Little companies of bicyclists, male and female, were coming in from Stubbington, or moving out, so as to forestall the hounds. At Tibb's Cross, the lanes were jammed with cars, and to Frampton's rage, there were dozens of people, riders and walkers, strolling in his field, between the Cross and the Wood.

"Look at the swine," he said, "in my field, as bold as be damned."

The American looked at him questioningly, not understanding why he was vexed. The next instant there came a cheer, a repeated triple cheer, from the crowd at the Cross, and then, on the second of the three cheers, as Frampton got his glass focussed on the scene, the huntsman of the Tunster came through the gate which Frampton had locked and wired only

the day before. The gate was wide open; the huntsman rode through it, with a trailing thong. Frampton could see the jerk on his lips as he said: "Hounds, gemmen, hounds." That was the thing they were cheering, the rape of the gate. At the hunter's heels came the famous pack of the Tunsters, all alive and alert and wild for the quarry.

"My Golly," Frampton said, "they've broken my gate and are going to draw Spirr. My crumpet, but I'll stop them."

He was white and wild with rage. "Come on down," he said.

He saw some rooks and two magpies come out of Spirr and go away. He saw, at once, that he could not possibly reach the covert in time. The lane just below was blocked with cars and people; three hundred people: he could not get through that press in time. He called again to the young man to come on down. He had some vague notion of braining Annual-Tilter, if he were there, with his binoculars. They had not gone three strides before the huntsman tooted with his horn. In an instant, the pack gave tongue, the whole pack was in cry. They were going off straight at the Spirr Wood fence. Nearly three-quarters of a ton of expensive dog went over the fence into the wood with a crash which Frampton plainly heard, with their huntsman beside them. All the crowd at the Cross cheered and cheered again; then instantly the riders at the Cross and in the fields were in motion, hats were being jammed down and cigars flung away, and the trembling horses put to it. There was a surge northwards from all the company. All Spirr rang with the excitement of the pack, the toots of the horn, and the View Halloos from the farther fence.

"Gee, that's a great sight," the young man said.

Indeed, it was a great sight; it was one of the most beautiful of sights. The leaves were off, you could see the trees; the autumn ploughing had turned up pale, dark and red earth;

the roots were bright green against these; there was stubble on one field and bracken on the hill; there were scarlet berries in the hedge; a crab-tree was covered with yellow apples. Amid all that beauty, the Hunt was in full cry. Wherever Frampton turned his glasses, he saw people desecrating his estate, riding, smashing, trespassing. All the jam in the lane was trying to move; the bicyclists were already streaming off, and riders trying to pass. A car, which had been heading in the wrong direction, had tried to turn, and was now jamming the way just below them. He could see two labouring men, at the direction of a horseman in scarlet, trying to break a gap in his fence, so that the riders might get past the jam. The fence was too strong for them, but Frampton saw the effort made.

"The swine, the swine," he said. "Right through my Wood, as though I'd asked them."

"Gee," the young American said, "I guess a hunting dog doesn't give a damn for conscience."

Indeed, they gave that impression, for they were out of the wood now, and away on the far side, going with heads up and sterns straight away for Wicked Hill, like the fox in the song.

"Gee," the American said, "say, how can I see some more of them?"

"Nip into your car," Frampton said; "go straight down that lane there, to Tibb's Cross; take the first turn to the right; there are fewer cars on that lane than up here. You'll catch them in ten minutes, or less; they can't keep that pace, whichever way they're heading."

"Gee, I guess, if you'll forgive me, I'll do that," the young man said. Looking at his host, he said: "Say, you look sore about something."

"Sore?" Frampton said. "I told these swine I meant Spirr

for a bird sanctuary, and they were to keep their foul pack out of it. And there, you saw them go slap through it."

"I sure did," he answered. "You can't blame them; they smelled a fox and just went for him."

"Hounds aren't anarchists," Frampton said. "They obey the word of command. This little game was planned."

All this time, they were trotting down to the garage, where the American's car was shining in the yard.

"Say," the young man said, "you look real sore."

"Would you like your sanctuary run through like that, after you'd asked for it to be let alone?"

"I guess I'd always like to see Englishmen enjoying themselves," the young man said. "In my country, we sometimes think they can't. Gee, it's a great sight. And if you'll excuse me, I'll run after them, and come back for my things later. You sure you won't come along and see them with me?"

"I will not," Frampton said.

The lad said: "So long, then," slammed his car-door and stepped upon the gas; he shot through the gates and away.

Some sightseers were now scrambling up the grass to the summer-house where he had just been standing. They were determined to have a better view of the vanishing hunt.

"Hi, you," Frampton called, "get out of that. Get out of that."

They turned to look at him, but continued their progress to the summer-house. Frampton left them for the instant. He wanted to see what harm had been done to Spirr. He set off thither on a run. In the lower part of his garden, he came suddenly on two ladies resting themselves on a bench beside his fishpool. One of them seemed scared, the other quite unabashed at his presence; they did not rise or apologise.

"Are you waiting for Mrs. Haulover?" he asked.

The hard one looked at him as at some curious wild beast and resumed her conversation.

"If you're waiting for Mrs. Haulover," he went on, "you'd be a lot more comfortable in the house."

He noticed a curious scent, and thought: "You two have been necking liqueurs."

The hard one produced and lit a cigarette.

"Are you Mr. Mansell?" she asked. "May we have a look around?"

"You seem to be having one," he said.

"Really?" she answered. "Well, perhaps you're right."

The scent wafted into Frampton's nostrils. "Anise," he commented to himself. "You're drunk." He loathed drunken women. "Still," he thought, "no-one will ravish this bird, drunk or sober."

"The way out is down here," he said, and passed on.

Their car was in his drive. They had driven it into the flower-beds in turning it; he took the number; he meant to learn the lady's name. He then hurried on to Tibb's Cross.

Nearly all the crowd had scattered now. The gate which he had chained and wired had been lifted off its hinges and left against the hedge. The chain and padlock were gone; the wire fastenings had been cut.

He walked rapidly across the field, towards the wood. An old man, whom he had not before seen, was standing in the field, staring, as men will, at the scene of some event, even long after the event has finished.

"Morning, sir," the man said, touching his forelock. "They'm off for the wild west."

"Yes, so it seems," he answered.

He was raging still at the insolence of the Hunt in disregarding his wishes. Yet he knew that Bynd could never

have countenanced such disregard? Who had arranged this? He was pretty sure that it had been arranged. As he crossed the field, he remembered suddenly how the hounds had given tongue outside the covert. It was one of those mild autumn days in which all scents hang heavy, almost like weight and warmth together upon the palate. What if the scent of fox had reached the pack overwhelmingly from outside the covert, and that they had dashed off uncontrollably, at head? He knew nothing of fox-hunting, but remembered the American's remark, that a hunting dog doesn't give a damn for conscience. As to the huntsman, well, he was one of the pack on a hunting morning; if the hounds were off, he would probably go with them, and ask nothing better.

At this point, he stopped dead. On the warm air a waft came upon his open mouth; he smelt again the anise of which the woman had partaken.

"That's the explanation, is it?" he muttered. "Aniseed; an aniseed drag, to take the Hunt through Spirr."

He stooped towards the ground; at one point a few feet from him aniseed must have been spilled; the place was rank with it. He went on to the covert, noting the damage to the fence. Tim, his warden, was not in his cottage. Three boys and two men were strolling in the wood; he told them to be out of it. The smell of aniseed led him through the wood, over the stream by the little bridge, and out of the wood on the far side to a point where several horsemen had waited for some time. Fusees, two half-cigars, and some cigarette-butts lay on the poachings of the hunters' hooves.

"They were in the know," he commented. "They knew that the hounds would run through Spirr, and break just here. This is all planned."

There was no need to go farther. Occasional wafts of anise

reached him. The tracks of the Hunt were printed plain across the field; they had gone off for Joys Bridge and Wicked Hill, as in the ballad. Lines of the ballad, which he had now seen, came into his mind.

‘For Joys Bridge he makes, where he takes
to the flood.

Tally-ho, tally-ho, boys, our hounds must
have blood.’

His mind meditated evil, but he saw that it might be difficult to catch the culprits and do evil to them. After all, could it be an offence to trail a bit of old rabbit or herring dipped in aniseed along the ground? This had every symptom of being a rag, devised by a few bright young things. That hard-mouthed jade in his drive, who stank of anise, was one of the contrivers, no doubt; she and a few of her set had probably laid the drag, given a wink and a tip to the Hunt servants and all had followed, as the night the day.

He thought, also, that it was possible that the rag had not been devised against, or at least not wholly against, himself. Why should they not have devised it against the crusted old sports who swore by the Tunster Tradition? Might it not have been fun to a queer kind of fool to hear these fellows blethering later about “a wonderful run, sir, over the very line taken on the Spirr Wood Day?” But he put this thought from him. His shutting of Spirr had angered every sportsman in the Tunster country. And anyhow, the Hunt had known that he wished the Wood to be respected. Anyone who had seen his gate, chained, padlocked and wired fast, would have known that it was devised to keep people from passing through. Instead of regarding it, they had burst it

open by force, lifted it from its hinges and left it unshipped. The Hunt had done that. Those fellows, whom he had seen urging two men to break his fence, would not have scrupled to bid others to lift the gate out of the way. Well, what he could do, he would do to trace the guilty. In any case, the hounds had trespassed; the Hunt was responsible for that. If he could make them squirm for it, he would. But he knew that poor old Bynd had nothing to do with it. Tilter was the lad, Annual-Tilter. His heart was raging for a victim, and at this point he thought of Timothy, his caretaker. Where was Timothy that morning of all mornings? Why had not Timothy seen the drag being laid and come to report? "He's nothing but a damn young slacker," he thought. But had the young slacker been bribed by the bright young things to be out of the way? Had he been lured out of the way? Well, after all, if he had gone to Stubbington to shop, it would have been no great sin. Anyhow, one young man could hardly have stopped a pack in full cry with their heads up.

However, he would deal with Tim later; he had some sleuthing to do. He meant to take casts of the footprints at the point where the hounds had "found" and gone off.

There was one point, where aniseed had been lavishly spilled. At this point, there were footprints in the soft soil. He was used to making and taking plaster casts; he took good plaster casts of these. Two women and a tall man, all wearing expensive boots or shoes, had loitered for a moment there. It was not very helpful. After all, many people had been at Tibb's Cross all the forenoon; fifty or sixty such might have been in the field.

"Those two birds who were at my pond were the women," he muttered. "I'll now get the prints of their feet in my flower-bed and near that bench."

He did so, and found that undoubtedly the two women from the car had been the two who had loitered in the field. He took his casts to his study and telephoned to the police, to say that the Hunt at Tibb's Cross had broken open and unhinged his gate, and run through his preserve. He wished them to enquire into this, because he meant to prosecute. All these things took him until nearly two o'clock; he lunched then, still raging, composing, as he ate and raged, a letter to the Hunt Secretary.

After lunch he was busy with other matters. After tea, he thought: "I'll get along, now, to Spirr, to find what Timothy knows of all this." But Timothy hadn't returned to the warden's lodge in the covert. "Nothing for it, but to do a pub-crawl," he thought. He judged that shopping would have taken perhaps an hour and a half, shopping and a haircut, two hours; but this absence meant a binge. "Rotten young ass," he growled.

He drove first to the *Hare and Hounds Inn*, near Weston Mullples. He noted, as he pulled up, that Timothy had repainted the inn-sign.

"Did it for a bottle of gin, probably," he growled, but had to admit that he had done it with a certain go.

However, Timothy hadn't been there lately, not since week afore last, the man thought; but Mr. Mansell might find him along at *The Adventure*. Frampton called at the *Prior's Arms* on the way to *The Adventure*, but drew the covert blank. *The Adventure* was a big old inn standing well back out of the traffic on the Stubbington road. As Frampton pulled up in that recess or bay in which the inn stood, he noticed the battered little run-about, which Tim called his tin-lizzie. From inside the bar, the clear and pleasant voice of Tim rang out in a ballad.

'My son is John, he lives in the town,
He helps me in my trade,
And whenever I look on his eyes of blue,
I think of that fair pretty maid.'

He sang it charmingly, as was his way when a little drunk; the audience, being much moved by a touching poem, did not applaud, but murmured.

Frampton went into the bar, which smelt and looked like other country bars. A game of darts was on one wall. Behind the bar was a big, stuffed, moth-eaten badger in a glass case, and a framed almanac of twenty-three years before, showing a lifeboat approaching a wreck. A tall, tired-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, was leaning behind the bar. Three men were sitting on the settles. Timothy and another man, a dapper little figure, very black and trim, were at the bar. The dapper man was saying:

"A sad but frequent case. Have another gin, Timothy."

Frampton had come in meaning to have Timothy out of it and to give him a roasting, but he suddenly recognized the landlord.

"Why," he said, "aren't you Mr. Hordiestraw, who used to keep the inn at Tallant Bay, in Devon? What brings you so far from home?"

"Why, Mr. Mansell," the man said, "we'm all simple fules, when it comes to city men. I reckon we'm all greedy, when the bacon is dangled. I was made a proper fule of; that's why I'm here. They say rogues don't prosper. Maybe they don't for long, but they prosper proper for a time; iss vai."

Frampton asked him a question or two, while the eyes of all the people present turned upon him. The little dapper

man had moved discreetly to the door. Frampton heard one of the men present say "the chap at *Mullples*"; the stares became intense, while old Hordiestraw told the tale of his disaster; they knew the story, but they had not yet seen at such advantage this chap what they said was mad and had naked folks painted on his walls. There came the noise of a little car starting off. Timothy had judged that the glass was falling and had made for cover.

Hordiestraw said: "I well remember what you liked, Mr. Mansell." He went to a door leading inwards from the bar and called: "Lily, Lily, bring up a bottle of Yellow Tommy. Here's Mr. Mansell come in."

Lily brought in Yellow Tommy, so called from being made from yellow tommy, or dandelion. She greeted Mr. Mansell, whom she had not seen for seven years, but well remembered from the days of their prosperity at Tallant's Bay, when they had had a snug little inn of their own, and Mansell had stayed there with old Naunton who was on a sketching tour. Lily wept as she remembered. She asked after Mr. Naunton, and whether he still went on with his sketching, much as one might have asked if Mr. Wordsworth still liked Nature and that. An old man, who saw the Tommy being poured, called out:

"You be careful of that stuff, Mr. Mansell. There came a London man here, drank some of it last week. Her didn't wake up for thirty hours."

Another replied, that "the London man was a proper mazed article, there could be no going by him."

Frampton remembered the cordial from of old. It was very fine stuff, but a very little of it was plenty.

Whether it was the Yellow Tommy or some other reason, Frampton suddenly felt, with a pang of emotion, that this

old, unhappy, cheated inn-keeper and his wife had been nicer and more welcoming to him, and plainly much gladder to see him, than anyone in all that district in which he had made his home. He saw, too, why Timothy preferred this kind of company.

"It isn't preference with him," he thought; "it's Hobson's choice. If I'm cut, what must he be?"

However, he was at the staple of news; he tried to gather some.

"You had the hounds past you this morning," he said. "Did they kill, did you hear?"

From the kind of cold plob with which the question fell, he knew at once that all there knew that a drag had been laid across Spirr, specially to spite himself. Some of them, he knew, must have seen the hounds; but all there knew the truth. They had been revelling in the truth all day.

Old Hordiestraw squirmed; but Yellow Tommy had loosened his cocks.

"There was a man here," he said, "just afore you come in, Mr. Mansell; he said, he see them get to it, out beyond the bridge there. He said it was a drag they were running; just a bit of skin and aniseed."

"I marvel their doing that," Frampton said; "there are lots of foxes about."

There was an uneasy squirming all round; they knew the truth, and suspected now that Mr. Mansell was out to get at the culprits, which would never do. No information was going to be had there. But two young men came in at that moment, and asked for a pint apiece.

"There'll be upsets," one of these men said. "There'll be changes in these parts, from this fatal day."

"What's the matter?" Hordiestraw asked.

"Poor Colonel Purple Tittup's been killed, hunting."

"No? When?"

"About half after three. He was jumping under a tree, and hit his head on a bough. Alf and I brought him in on a hurdle."

"Was he alive, then?"

"No, dead. He was killed, dead, and never knew what hit him."

"Where was this?" one of the men asked.

"Just this side of Russell's. They stopped the Hunt, of course."

"Well, it was a quick end," somebody said. "And you're right, it may bring changes. He owned all of Stubbington Great Wood. All that will have to be sold."

The young man who had brought the news finished his pint.

"It'll be the end of Stubbington Wood, and *Tittups*, too," he said. "No-one'll take an old den like that to live in. It's time these big estates got broken up, that's what I say."

"*Tittups* was a fine place in my grandfather's time," the other young man, Alf, said. "Lots of beer going."

The two men were at the bar; they had caught up the communal dice-box and were throwing threes for who should pay for the pints. They had not noticed Frampton, who was at the far end of the bar, in bad light. Alf lost the throws and paid. His friend looked up and said:

"They laid a drag through Spirr, 's morning. That was a quiff of that lad they call Pob Ted and his piece, the Brass-Eyed Sarah, to spite this toff who closed the wood" Hordiestraw made him a sign to shut up, but he was not quick in reading the sign, and in any case not prone to silence. "A damn good quiff, too," he went on. "Why should a damn

London toff come down here and spoil people's sport? What did a London toff want in a rotten old drain like *Mullples*, anyway?"

Mrs. Hordiestraw, who was in misery at this, now whispered "Hush."

He looked at her defiantly:

"Why should I hush? I don't see."

Frampton came along the bar to him.

"She was afraid you might hurt my feelings," he said. "I'm the man at *Mullples*. It's all right; no harm's done, and no ill feelings caused. You couldn't know I was here. But I bought *Mullples* because I thought it too fine a house to be let fall to pieces. Mrs. Hordiestraw, I wonder if we may have a bottle of Yellow Tommy, so that we can all have some?"

Mrs. Hordiestraw brought out a bottle; the cordial went round; it was said to be rare good tackle. The two young men looked at Frampton with friendlier eyes, but at the same time were wary. At the second passing of Tommy, the talk turned on the late Colonel Tittup. One there had seen him ride by that morning, on his way to his death. They had liked the old chap; he had done some manful things in his day; some of the friendly, stupid, testy and kindly things done and said by him were recounted. Frampton thought that the knowledge shown was extraordinary. The Colonel would have known nothing like this of any one of the men who thus discussed him.

"He wasn't easy, if you wanted anything done," one man said, "not in his last years. I've got a brother in Stubbington. They got the Colonel just after the War to be like what they call the Chairman or Treasurer for Stubbington War Memorial; and they've never been able to agree what sort of a memorial to have; and they haven't got one yet. The

money's lying in the bank, and will be, till the next War, like as not." He thought a moment, and then went on. "He was all for having a cricket-field, the Colonel was; and most of the others wanted a swimming-pool or a stone and that; but the Colonel said: 'Waterloo was won on the cricket-fields, not in any swimming-pool or stonemason's yard.'"

Frampton left them after this; it was time to be off. He left the inn, reflecting on the names Pob Ted and Brass-Eyed Sarah.

"That will be Sarah Drachm, of *Poids House*," he thought. "And if any dame earned her nickname, she has earned hers: brass in eye and heart and brow, in hair and nail and tooth; a real 'brass-bounder. Pob Ted is the long lout who was in the covert the other day, perhaps."

As he reached home, the young American drove up. He was flicked about with mud, but rosy and happy, with shining eyes. It did Frampton good to see a man enjoying so keenly.

"Did you enjoy your hunt?" Frampton asked.

"Enjoy it? Gee, I should smile," the youth said. "I got over a sort of bridge, and there were the hounds right in front of me. I never had such a kick out of anything. After about another three miles, I came on the lot of them dancing round a bit of a rabbit on a string. Then somebody asked, wouldn't I like to be riding. I could get a horse at a sort of a big inn, there. So I went to the inn and got a horse. I'd no sooner gotten him, than the hounds were off on a fox, they said, and I went with them. I guess I must have been pretty close to him, but I couldn't see him."

"They stopped the hunt because a man was killed, I understand," Frampton said.

"Is that so? I stopped, because my horse wouldn't go any

farther, and I've got to make Chester, to see this guy about this deal. Gee, if I put the deal through I'm going to cable my pop, I'm going to stop over and do some hunting. Say, what do you fellows do to a fox when you get him?"

"They get him from the hounds and smear some of his blood on a new-comer's face. Then they cut off his head, or mask, as you have to call it, and his tail, which they call his brush, and his feet, which they call his pads; these they treasure as relics. Then they yell, to excite the hounds, and when the hounds are excited, they chuck the rest of him to them, for them to eat. They wouldn't eat unless half crazy; a fox is a stinking meat."

The American pondered this; then said that he guessed, if he might be excused, he would be getting a move on. He had had a great time and enjoyed every minute of it; but from what someone had said, he judged he was somewheres of a long way from Chester, and didn't want to be too late in getting there." He listened to Frampton's directions, and read through a written route which Frampton put into his hand. "I guess I'll make it," he said.

Frampton had no doubt that he would make the North Pole, in case of need.

When he was alone, Frampton had leisure to think of the day. It had been a savage day to him, and he meant to make it rough for those who had made it so. Going through the hall, he found cards on the table from Mr. Practice Method-Methodde, M.P. and wife. Helga told him that a chauffeur had brought them all the way from the road.

"Practice Method-Methodde," he repeated. "That's the Member for this constituency." He was indignant with him. Why had he not come himself to the door, if this were a call? "I suppose," he muttered to himself, "you were out at the

meet or watching the hounds, and thought you could just send your man up, as I should certainly be away; and then you could say that you had called."

He determined that he would not return the call.

The cards were yet another fillip to his rage, as he sat to write to the Hunt Secretary. What sort of England had he come into? he wondered. He sat at his study table and wrote to Sir Peter, to say that he was surprised that the hounds had been permitted to enter Spirr after his wish that they should keep out of it. He added that he had meant what he said, that Spirr was to be a Bird Sanctuary, and that he was determined to keep the hounds out in future. In addition to the trespass into the closed covert of Spirr, people had broken open, and then unhinged, a securely fastened gate, so that the trespass of the whole gathering might be easy. If there were any explanation, he said that he would be glad to hear it. He sent this letter down to *Coombe* by his driver that evening, thinking that an answer would come by hand that night. It did not come. He went to bed fuming with rage, but was a little appeased by the thought that a note would reach him at breakfast-time.

It did not come. In his anger, he telephoned to *Coombe House*, asking for Sir Peter. He was answered by the angry ham, that Sir Peter had gone, two nights before, to London, and would be there for three nights more. Sir Peter, therefore, was out of the plot; he had not been there with the hounds; and in his absence the plotters, whoever they were, had had an easy time. He was glad that Sir Peter had not been present; nothing of the kind would have happened if he had been. But he reflected that Annual-Tilter had been in command there; he was the man responsible.

"I'll rub the Tilter's nose in the mud for this," he vowed.

"If a Master cannot keep his field in order, he'd better be shown up," he growled.

He turned to his breakfast-table, where his letters waited for him. At the top of the pile was one in an unknown lady's hand, postmarked Stubbington; he opened this, and read:

Dear Mr. Mansell,

My husband was so sorry to find you out, when he called yesterday.

("He'd have been a damn sight sorrier to find me in," Frampton growled.)

He was so anxious to interest you in a scheme he has for reviving the water-carrying industries of these parts.

It will be such a pleasure to us to see you here at lunch, when the House rises. At present we are such birds of passage.

("Now we come to the main point," he growled.)

We wonder whether you could be so very kind as to find something in your wonderful Works for our boy, Prentice, who, since he left the University has found it so difficult to find anything to do. He is here at present, and would be so glad of a chance to show what is in him, but post-war England is so difficult, is it not? Will you, please, think of him if you have anything?

Yours sincerely,

Willie Method-Methodde.

"Willie Method-Methodde," Frampton repeated, "sweet little Wilhelmina-pina Mrs. Methody Pethody. Something in my wonderful Works for a lad who finds it so difficult to find anything to do, who wants so to show what is in him until

the water-carrying industry's revived. What the devil does she mean by the water-carrying industry? Does she mean bringing the water-carts to the Tatchester slums? Or men going round, as they did in old London, selling buckets of water at the doors?" He remembered then a speech in the House about the restoration of canals. Probably that was what she meant. The wonderful Works were to house the fledgeling till he could get a whole time job as a bargee. He liked her assumption, that the Works would be the place for her son. Not a word of capacity, or interest, or keenness, or knowledge of guns or explosives; just the fact that he had been at the University and found it difficult to get anything. Well, she would find it jolly difficult to get anything out of him, if that was the way she went about it.

The next letter was from the *Stubbington Gazette*, a little four-page weekly, which he had seen once or twice. He had passed its office in Stubbington several times; usually the window was full of the week's local photographs, and thereby conspicuous. The letter ran:

Dear Mr. Mansell,

Though I have not the pleasure of knowing you, I have often heard of you from my brother, Charles Harold, who was, till recently, one of your chemists. It is possible that he may have mentioned me to you. I am present editing the Stubbington Gazette, or trying to. I am also writing a little monograph on the paintings of Tenor Cobb, who has, I know, done so much work for you at Mullples. I write to ask, if you will be so very kind as to let me see your Cobbs during daylight, sometime in the next week or two, if that be not asking too much.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Harold.

He knew Charles Harold, of course, as a young and brilliant chemist, who had left the Works in order to make a special study of certain matters in China. So here was another Harold, probably a most unusual chap, running a little paper and writing about modern painting.

"There's real genius in that family," he thought.

He went to the telephone at once, got through to Mr. Harold, and asked him to come to lunch that day. He would be in Stubbington, and would bring him out to *Mullples*. Things weren't so bad, perhaps, if over at Stubbington there were people who knew about Cobb.

When this had been arranged, he drove over to Stubbington to the police station, where he explained that he owned Spirr Wood, that he had warned the Hunt that he wished it to be observed as a bird sanctuary, and not to be drawn, and that conspicuous notices of PRIVATE were at several points. In spite of this (here he produced his casts), a drag had been run through it, his gate broken open and unhinged, and his fields and property trespassed upon and damaged. He wanted summonses against those who had broken open the gate, laid the drag and ridden the covert. He said that he had reason to suppose that the drag was laid by a Miss Drachm, and two friends. The casts on the table were of the footprints of the three whom he believed to be guilty of the drag, but the Hunt must have known of the drag and were guilty of the trespass. The Master and the huntsman, and probably the Whip as well, must have been in the secret. He had taken pains to show the Hunt that Spirr Wood was to be a bird sanctuary, and as such not to be disturbed. He had spent, as he put it, a pot of money on the place, and would not permit his wishes to be flouted thus.

The Police Inspector was a large and genial man;

he had had a man out to Spirr to see the damage done.

"You could see they'd been in the field," he said. "They'd had the wires round the gate cut with clippers and had taken the gate off the hinges. Since you insist upon it, Mr. Mansell, the summonses shall be issued. Are you sure that the PRIVATE notices could be seen?"

"Certain," Frampton said.

"My man says that he didn't see any notices."

"They were there."

"He says he couldn't see any. He says he couldn't see much damage to the wood, except just at the fence."

"The fence and the gate," Mansell said.

"You see," the Inspector went on, "the bench has no jurisdiction for trespass, unless damage is done. And the damage must be done wilfully and/or maliciously."

"I do not say that much damage was done," Frampton said. "I say that some was done, wilfully and maliciously. The Master of the Hunt could have stopped his servant trespassing on the field. The huntsman could have stopped the hounds entering the covert. They didn't; and I'll have them up for it."

"We'll get to the bottom of it," the Inspector said. "You leave it to the Law."

"Do you know anyone named Pob Ted?" Frampton asked.

The Inspector's brow clouded.

"Him and Miss Drachm'll be my death one day," he said, but said no more.

After this, Frampton went on to meet Richard Harold at the *Gazette* office. He was a young man, with a whimsical, clever face, very like his chemist brother, but with a feeling for art, which the chemist was without.

He was like the young naval officer in charge of a picket-boat, very happy in his first command. As the young naval

man may thrill at the question, "Who commands this saucy packet?" so did Richard Harold thrill when someone clumped up the dark and winding stair, and asked: "Where can I find the Editor?"

"It's no great shakes of a place," Harold explained. "It's in the old premises of the founder, with the press at the back, there. But it's awfully interesting experience. I've been here a year, and I've enjoyed every second of it."

The Editor's room was certainly no great shakes of a place, being littered with old galleys, old books of reference, files of script, and heaps of advertisements. It looked out upon a yard, beyond which were the printing works. Down below, in a dingy den, two young men worked at their calling with scissors and paste. Frampton got the young man into his car, with the feeling that this lad would not long be at Stubington. He mentioned his feeling; Harold blushed, and said that he had put in, as it happened, for a real paper elsewhere, but would not know just yet.

At lunch, they talked of art, of which Richard knew much, not wholly as a scholar. He had been for a time under Berquin in Paris, trying to etch.

"What on earth made you chuck Paris and etching with a chap like Berquin, to come to edit a Gazette in Stubington?" Frampton asked.

"Well," Richard said, "if you saw my etchings, perhaps you might not ask that. I'm no good as an etcher, and never shall be. Berquin told me that I etched just like an *Anglais*, 'for the advertisement, yes, perhaps, in the provinces, but for the Art, no.' He told me the truth, and as I'd come to suspect it, it didn't hurt too much. I know that I've a flair for running a paper. I did it at school rather well. I heard that the *Gazette* here was dicky. My mother used to know the owner

years and years ago. I went to the old chap and asked if I might not have a try at pulling it round. *Nihil praestat buccae*. Nothing like cheek. So I got the job; and I've got it round. I hope to get a quite big provincial paper presently, and then start on my own, and enter politics. It isn't what I'd hoped for myself, but it's what I know I can do. Old Berquin told me what I'd begun to suspect: 'Arold, you are not artist, you are gentlemen.' Well, he is right, but I do love art, and I must say it is a pleasure to come to a house like this, only a few miles from Stubbington, and see all these things and find you, who know it all."

"There doesn't seem to be much art in Stubbington. People don't seem much to care for it," Frampton said.

"How can they care for it?" Harold said. "If it ever touches their lives at all, it is as something rammed into them from above, by someone plainly not enlightened."

"I'm delighted to hear you say that," Frampton said.

"The best thing that one can say about them is, that they know well enough that art of that sort isn't any good to them. It isn't any good to anybody. Art is a thing that must have roots in life. Any sort of weed-art is better than the sort of cut-flowers-art, which these chaps sometimes try to foist on them. The arts of Stubbington are considerable, however. The dairy-farms are good; there are three flower-farms which are remarkable; not on this side, of course; you'll be on the Waste here. There are some market-gardens out towards Tatchester, and especially towards Stanchester, which are worth a visit. But, of course, all these things do not count. The real interest, excitement and energy, all the really creative elements of the soul, are devoted to sport, shooting to some extent, and just round Stubbington there is fishing, but mainly fox-hunting. That is the real or only delight and joy to the

well-to-do in this county and the four all round it. As far as these people have an art, that is their art, and there can be no doubt that they practise it whole-heartedly. You know, there's a lot to be said for it."

"I know all that is said for it," Frampton said. "I wonder if by any chance you know of any young man about here known as Pob Ted?"

"Young Prentice Methodde, the Member's son, is known as Pob Ted. He's a waster, who roams from field to field here. His father got me to give him a job in the office, saying that it would be such a good introduction to politics for him. He's no good. He couldn't do any one thing that we put him to here, and didn't try to. So we sacked him at the end of a week. You keep clear of him. Willie M-M, the mother, will be on to you, probably, to give him a job in your factory. Well, don't."

"Pob Ted," Frampton said. "What does Pob mean?"

"It sort of describes the chap," Harold said. "He is what you would call a Pob. I mean, it leaps to the eye, that. He is a pobby sort of a chap. If he were doobby, you could trust him; if he were knobby, you could have him operated on; if he were sobby, you could have him psycho-analysed; but as he's only pobby, he's a very bad jobby."

They had a pleasant afternoon together, looking at works of art, and discussing favourite painters. Frampton's Tenor Cobbs were looking their best. It was the happiest time Frampton had yet had at *Mullples*. When Harold had gone, he felt again his anger against the Hunt. There was no letter of apology from the Secretary, nor had there been a call of apology from the Master. This he thought the limit of rudeness. There would have been time for his letter to reach Bynd, who ought by this to have telegraphed an apology.

"And I'm to give the layer of the drag a job in my Works, am I?" he growled.

He went to his den and wrote to his Member's wife, that he made it a rule never to give employment save to someone who could prove that he had aptitude. If her son could show this quality, why, then, the path lay open. As he expected, the letter was not answered.

There came no apology from Annual-Tilter.

Something recalled the Inspector's words that the policeman had been unable to see the notices of PRIVATE in and near Spirr Wood. He went down to see about this. He had not noticed the point before, but it was plain now: all the notices had been pulled down before the Hunt's visit. The boards marked PRIVATE had been sawn from their posts; the posts were left prone, but the notices had gone. He went on to Timothy, who showed that he knew nothing about the Hunt's coming; he had been out of the Wood when the Hunt came. He knew nothing about the removal of the notice-boards. He was at work drawing a dead wood pigeon which he had picked up that morning. Frampton was pleased to see him really at work again. Frampton told him that he was summoning the Hunt, and that it was a pity, that he, Timothy, had chosen the hunting morning, of all mornings, to go off on the binge.

"You don't do the firm much good, you know," he said, "going off like that. The chaps took down the notices right under your nose. No wonder these sportsmen think the bird sanctuary is a joke. Well, it isn't a joke; I mean it to be the real thing; and these morning drams are no good to you. They'll do you down. If you'd spent your evening well you'd not want any morning dram. Now you'll pull up your leg-gings and get your evidence ready, about the damage these

devils have done. Come on, now, and see with your own eyes."

A little work with plaster showed that the three who had laid the drag had removed the notice-boards. He sent word to the police about this.

"You can get busy on that, too," he said. "I'll summons the three for wilful damage."

It was not long before Sir Peter Bynd came to *Mullples* to apologise. He seemed much aged and broken since they had met at lunch.

"You know, Mr. Mansell," he said, "I am much grieved at the Hunt's trespass in your covert the other day. I was in London, unfortunately. The Hunt is full of apology, but I need hardly say that the whole thing was not in any way the action of the Hunt, but a prank of some of the young people. It was a mistake to meet at Tibb's Cross, when you had closed Spirr. I ought to have seen that; but the wishes of the rest were too strong for me. There are two or three young people who come down here, who aren't very wise. It may be best not to mention names. But I am sorry to say they opened your gate and persuaded everybody that you had relented at the last minute and wished the Hunt to draw Spirr. They told the Huntsman this; he's a very good, simple fellow; and he believed them. They told the Whipper-in, that there was to be a drag, and that he was to halloo hounds away. He ought to have known better, but, of course, now that the harm's done, he's very contrite. For the rest of the field, of course, they believed what they wanted to believe, that you had opened Spirr again. Of course, all the best of them are very sorry. I think it was the greatest of pities that I was not there. A very old friend of mine was ill in London then; in fact, he died that morning. I was with him for his last few

days of course, and have only now returned. Unfortunately, with myself not there and a new Master in charge, these young people had it their own way. But on behalf of the Hunt, I apologise sincerely, and hope that the matter may be forgiven and forgotten."

He looked so wretched and spoke with so much charm, that Frampton would have been indeed stony-hearted had he felt no sympathy. But he was not a forgiving man. Suddenly there came into his mind the image of Annual-Tilter, the acting Master. Why the devil had not Tilter come to apologise? Tilter had been at the meet, though Bynd had been in London; Tilter, the fierce fool, who had blocked the Mansell Gun through a year of war.

"Sir Peter," he said, "no one could hear you speak without being won to your side. I realise that if you had been there the trespass would never have been made. You were not in any way responsible. I was very angry at the trespass, and am angry still, that those who were responsible should not have apologised. It was meant as an insult, not as a prank, and every day without apology makes the insult worse. If these had been the days of duels, I'd have had your Tilter out and put a bullet through him."

This was not the kind of talk to which Sir Peter was accustomed; he was astonished at Frampton's tone.

"I'm sorry that you should be vexed with Annual-Tilter," he said. "He was as much misled by these practical jokers as anybody there. I feel sure, that when he understands how you feel about it, he will be the first to come to make amends."

"He should have been the first," Frampton said. "He should in all things have been the first. As it is, he is the last, as always." He was thinking more of the Mansell Gun than

of Spirr Wood at the moment. "However," Frampton said, "the matter's out of my hands now. It is too late for him to apologise. The Stubbington police will, by this time, have summoned him. That may teach him that I'm in earnest about Spirr."

Sir Peter came away soon after this, wondering whether his wife were not altogether right about the tenant of *Mullples*. He did not tell her all that Frampton had said, but told her that he was angry, as she would have been, if a trespass of the sort had been made at *Coombe*. She said, that at *Coombe* people were not spoil-sports and knew how to take jokes. Sir Peter thought that perhaps they knew only how to take the jokes of their kind, and that often what seemed a joke to one class might be taken as a deadly insult and avenged as such, perhaps years afterwards, by another. He knew that Frampton had had a shattering loss not many months before; and he knew, too, how cruelly and easily a vanity may be injured, and how it will brood and brood and anon flame out appallingly.

The news that the Hunt had been summoned to the Magistrates' court spread through the land and filled the countryside with fury. Here was this gun fella summoning the Master; the fella must be mad, first of all tries to spoil sport, then can't take a joke. Of course, those young fools are young fools, but hang it all, to summons the Hunt. Chap ought to be put in Coventry; ought to be horse-whipped; ought to be shot.

The case was heard a few days later at the Stubbington Magistrates' Meeting. It was well advertised in the nation's Press. Dick Harold gave Frampton a hint that a fairly tough set of sportsmen were going to duck him at the bridge there. Frampton said, let them try it. He didn't much believe in

listening to threats, but set out to the Court with a knuckle-duster in each pocket, just in case. He would mark one or two before they got him into any river. Just before he started, his lawyer warned him, by telephone, that there was a good deal of feeling, and that the London Press were taking it up.

"Let them take it up," he said. "The trespass and damage are undoubted. The more the folly of the idle is made apparent the better."

The Magistrates met on Market Days at Stubbington; the little town was very full. He left his car at a garage, some distance from the Court, and walked the rest of the way. For the greater part of his journey he was not recognised. The crowds were country folk come in for the market. When he began to draw near the Court, he saw that the Press was there in strength. Cinema and camera men were on all the doorsteps opposite the Court-house; unmistakable interviewers were at the Court-house door. In the street leading to the Court was a crowd of the friends of the defendants. There they all were: Hard-Riding Dick, old Bill Ridden, the Kowzer, with his Morny-Cannon tile with a woodcock feather in its band, several chaps with slit mouths and the eyes of grooms, and several nondescript lads, in baggy plus-fours with tassels at the knee. The women were all of one sort; though one or two wore jodhpores instead of skirts, they all wore the same sorts of tweed, shoes and hats; all were made up in the same ways, with the same clip and the same ripple in their hair, the same vermilion streak instead of a mouth, and the same thin lines instead of eyebrows. They smoked the same kind of cigarette, each with the same air of not liking it. but being unable to do without it, and all those who wore no gloves had the same red finger-nails, as though they had been scratching rivals.

"But what rivals can these creatures have?" he asked. "What man could put in for one of these?"

He passed through this brazen company towards the policemen at the door; and as he passed, he heard their comment, which was meant for him to hear. The Press sprang into action as he approached; the ostler-looking men called to them, not to let the mucker break their cameras; the interviewers surged round, asking questions, which he would not answer; the cinema-men worked their little wheels till he was inside the door. He went into the Court and took a seat. Presently, the Magistrates came in, and the first case was called, of Sampson Stockfish, a fruiterer's assistant, for trespassing in pursuit of game. The case was slowly presented by a policeman, who spoke so that each word might be recorded by a slow scribe; but the evidence when heard and weighed did not suffice; Sampson was dismissed.

Frampton's case was the second on the list. The preliminaries were soon settled, and the issue joined. Frampton, looking about him, saw that the Court was crammed with people. All the Hunt was there. Wherever he turned his eyes, he saw a face staring at him with hostility. He liked hostility. He lived by it. These were his enemies; he had fought them in the War and ever since. He thought them idle and stupid; and if he had to fight them on points in which they were neither of these things, why, all the better. Anyhow, there was his real enemy, Annual-Tilter; he'd brought Annual-Tilter there; that was worth any money. He looked at the Tilter and his wife; though they were surrounded by all their friends, they seemed uneasy. He rejoiced at the sight.

But the case had begun. A policeman, again humouring the slow scribe, was with maddening prolixity saying:

"On hearing that a trespass a trespass

with damage had been said to have been committed at Spirr Wood in this County I went to the said Wood . . ." He went on to say how he had seen Spirr Wood, its gate, unhinged, its battered fence, but no notices of Private. Then, acting on information received, he had spoken to the accused, who had not denied the fact.

The accused, the Brass-Eyed Sarah, Pinkie, and Pob were now sworn. Pob, who was not at his usual bright best, spoke for the three of them. He said:

"It was a rag, that's all it was; just a rag. You know, he turned us out of Spirr Wood. He wouldn't let the hounds draw Spirr. I mean to say, what? So I said, let's put a drag across the covert. That's all it was; just a rag."

"Yes," came the question, "but after laying the drag, you took certain steps to ensure that the hounds should follow the drag. Will you tell the Court what those steps were?"

"It was only just a rag. We told old Bill to let the hounds hunt the drag, and Joe to view a fox away."

"These were the Hunt servants, in short?"

"Yes; the Huntsman and the Whip."

"Did you give them anything to encourage them to this course? How much did you bribe them with?"

"I say, you know, it wasn't a bribe, what. It was a tip. I gave them the usual sort of tip. One always gives them something on the opening day."

"Nothing more than your usual tip? How much altogether? And did this sum come from your own pockets or from all you three conspirators?"

"I paid; the others said they would give it me presently."

"Did they?"

"No."

"Why not? Have you dunned them? Why haven't they paid?"

"They've had rather a bad week or two with the dogs."

"But bribing the Hunt servants was not enough for your purpose. All three of you were active at Tibb's Cross, were you not, saying that Mr. Mansell wanted the hounds to draw Spirr? You unhinged the gate? You took down all the notices to support these misstatements?"

"It was all just a rag; that's all it was."

"But you did take down the notice-boards, and you did spread that report, a false report, knowing it to be false?"

"It was only a rag. We wanted the rag to come off. It was only fun."

"Is lying fun to you?"

"We didn't think anybody would mind a bit of fun."

"Would you have thought it fun if somebody had bribed the Hunt to ride over your mother's flower-garden?"

"Yes."

"Would she have thought it fun?"

"She'd have entered into the fun of the thing."

"What is the fun of the thing?"

"Why, just doing the thing; scoring someone off. We were scoring him off for stopping Spirr Wood. Any decent chap would see it was meant for a rag."

"You think that when three people old enough and civilised enough to know better do an insolent and harmful thing, a man is bound to conclude that they only do it for fun?"

"Yes, of course they only do it for fun."

"But where is the fun, will you tell me? Is it fun to insult a man? Is it fun to spoil his property? Is it fun to break the laws?"

Brass-Eyed Sarah said that if a man had no sense of humour it was useless arguing.

Poor Bill and Joe gave evidence that they had undertaken to support the rag, and that they were very sorry. Annual-Tilter said that he had been misled by the statements of the three young people, that the ban on Spirr had been removed. He said that the Hunt Secretary had given a very full apology and sincere expression of regret, which he thought would have been ample. He was new to the country, and was sorry to have begun his Mastership on an estate where fox-hunters were not welcome. As to the trespass, he had always understood that hounds might follow a fox anywhere, a fox being vermin, and his death a benefit to the community.

The magistrates conferred among themselves in low tones. As the matter seemed to them to be important, they withdrew, so that they might debate it in their room. While they were away, the friends of the Bright Young Things rallied round their cronies. Frampton heard Pob told that he was "marvous, absooty marvous."

Presently the Magistrates returned. Through their spokesman, they spoke first to Annual-Tilter. They told him that he had been misled by the statements of the others. The Hunt *had* trespassed, and the Hunt servants were much to blame; a certain amount of damage had been done by the Hunt, which they assessed at 7/6d.; this the Hunt should pay to Mr. Mansell. As to the Hunt servants, they had now realised how very foolish their share in the prank had been. There was a very serious offence, known as the taking of secret commissions. They understood that the Hunt authorities had spoken very earnestly to them; they would, therefore, say no more, feeling quite sure that the offence would never be repeated.

The Chairman now turned to the three main offenders. He was a ponderous old man, no hunter, but a keen fisherman, who thought that Frampton ought to be hunted out of the county for bringing the case at all. He now began his main speech.

"You have heard it claimed that hounds may follow a fox anywhere, a fox being vermin. Let me assure you all that that is not so. Trespass, wilful and malicious damage are offences. You all admit that you have been guilty of these offences. You must all see that you have acted most improperly. You have misled a lot of other people into acting improperly. You have said that you did all this for a joke, or, as you put it, a rag. A great deal of folly and even criminality is done in the name of ragging. Your ragging has been a violation of the law, for which you would be the first to expect a poor person to be sent to prison. You must pay Mr. Mansell compensation, amounting in all to one pound, for the chain, the wire and the padlock, broken from the gate, for the rehangings of the gate and the restoration of the notice-boards. I think that the best course you can pursue is to apologise to Mr. Mansell for the trouble and annoyance you have caused, not only to him, but to everybody here to-day."

The three culprits were not abashed by the Chairman's homily. Frampton heard Pinkie say that the old putt was priceless. There was a general stir in Court, as a lot of the sporting set made for the door. The man, the Kowzer, who was a well-known dare-devil, who had done desperate deeds in the War, at once moved round to the door to block their going. He held out his hat to the members of the Hunt.

"Silver collection," he said, "on behalf of the victims. It's your money I want. Silver for the Spirr Wood Martyrs."

There was laughter at this; the policemen at the door looked

a little askance, but the Kowzer was a privileged man; and the hat had thirty shillings in it in half a minute. With this money he paid the two mulcts to Frampton's lawyer. The Court was in much turmoil, with the people going out and unrestrained chatter. The Bench talked among themselves, waiting till the crowd had gone before taking the next case. Frampton saw the three culprits receiving congratulations from their friends; they did not look as though they would apologise to anybody.

"Why the devil should they apologise?" he said to himself. "Damn it," he thought, "I wouldn't apologise. But I've had them up and cleared the score; I'll give them a chance to shake hands."

He judged that he ran a good chance of a rebuff, but took the chance. Very Christianly, but unwisely, he went up to Pob and said:

"I hope that now the score is cleared, we may shake hands."

The people round the three fell away, with wonder on their faces at the bounder and his rudeness; the pieman's son asking to shake hands with the Member's son, just after he'd dragged him through the Court. Pob was not very quick and did not gather for an instant what was happening.

"What's this?" he said. "Kowzer's paid your man the fine. I'm not going to pay you."

"I'm only offering to shake hands," Frampton said.

"That's a little bit too thick, what," Pob said. "Not when you can't take a rag."

Frampton withdrew his hand and glanced at Brass-Eyed Sarah, a very properly named woman, for she seemed both barren and brassy. Pinkie, under her breath, said:

"My God, the Early Christian stunt."

He regretted his impulse.

"Just as you please, of course," he said, and walked out, hearing Sarah's comment:

"That bounder's got a pretty good cheek."

The next case was called before he left the Court; as it was a bastardy case, the three Martyrs remained to hear it. Frampton went out into the street, where some of the tougher members of the Hunt were waiting for him; they viewed him away with cries of "Hot pies; hot pies; all hot," in delicate allusion to his father's boyhood in Stanchester. The Kowzer came up, bearing half a crown conspicuously between forefinger and thumb.

"Mr. Mansell, of *Mullples*?" he asked. Frampton looked him in the eye, expecting trouble here. "I've brought you this half-crown," the Kowzer said. "A little tribute from the Hunt, who ask you to buy a leather medal with it."

It came instantly into Frampton's mind that he had seen this fellow, or half seen him, with the barmaid at the *Stag's Death* in Tuncester only two nights before. It came like a flash, with the certainty of inspiration.

"When you've bought it,"^b the Kowzer concluded, "please hang it on your rump and let us kick it for you."

Frampton made no effort to take the money.

"Half a crown," he said; "you ought to keep that. It'll be the first instalment on your barmaid's bastard at Tunster presently."

This took the wind out of the Kowzer's sails; it was a surprise; it knocked him flat. Frampton walked on through the hostile company. He would take good care, he promised himself, that no other hunt should run a drag through Spirr, nor come on to any ground of his. He took his car and drove home.

Though he meant to spend most of his time at *Mullples* until Christmas, it was not a home to him; it was a place of unrest, bitterness and disappointment. Margaret, who had become the symbol of all that he was lacking, was gone from it.

"Nature has put a curse on this Waste," he growled, "and everybody says that monkish land has cursed everybody who has held it since the monks were flung out. Now the curse hangs on me, the double curse. Once I used to be happy in my work. I enjoyed making guns and things. Why should I go on making them? I've no one to make for now, no son to hope for and no soul to try to please. I don't even want to make a gun so deadly that man will be able to destroy himself off the planet. I've come to an end."

For some weeks after Margaret's death, he had dreaded and loathed motor-driving. Those feelings faded, while he was in the Far West. Now that he was at *Mullples*, he found that driving late at night, or in the early mornings, was soothing to him. He had to watch his road and think of what he was doing, and had, as he put it, the damn world to himself. While going through the swift, dark night, with his lights on the sickle of the road in front, and his eyes on the swerve of the road, he could forget his frustrations and the bitterness of his home-coming.

"I was to have shared life with Margaret in a beautiful place; and instead of that I'm in hell, fighting the local skunks alone."

That was the thought always present to him, in the Works, and at *Mullples*, and in all those places about Newbury which brought memories of her. He did not think it so often when driving alone at night. Besides, if he took a car and went away at a venture, soon after dinner, he dodged the long evening alone. He could reach the sea at a lonely point of the coast,

in a little more than an hour. That was a favourite run of his. Or he could enter a distant city, and seek out the queer places of amusement in its lower ways, thinking that "what amuses the foundation of the race may amuse me, who am shaken to my foundation." It did not amuse him in the least. His old friends, well, he shrank from them; he was a hurt beast shunning the herd, and they, knowing his queerness and prickliness shrank from him, fearing to hurt him and rouse an explosion. So he began to drive out from *Mulple*s late in the evenings and return in the early mornings after runs of a hundred or a hundred and fifty miles. Then he took to driving afield before dinner, to dine far off among strangers, in odd places, where no-one and no thing could remind him of his past, where he would be the unknown among the unknown, in a relationship too brief to be unhappy.

Then he took to searching in shops of second-hand goods for books and prints of interest to himself. He had always had a flair for things; he beat through the grimy nooks of many a foul old shop, and found much that was of value, but unfashionable at the moment. But what good was it? He didn't want the things. Margaret was dead, who might have liked them.

Soon after the Magistrates' Court, it chanced that he was driving home late in a dark, moist and somewhat misty night, bad for driving, upon roads not well known to him. He was saying to himself: "Somewhere near here there's a beast of a bend," when he knew suddenly that the bend was there, just ahead. He slackened and changed gear, and proceeded round with caution. As he came round, he saw something on the road in front of him; he switched all his lights upon it. A big car, with its bows in the ditch to the left, was slued half across the road. As it was on the bend of the road, Frampton

crawled past it, put his car in safety, and came back with a strong pocket torch to examine.

"There'll be a corpse or two under that," he told himself. "Blessed are they who find a motor-smash, for they will be charged with manslaughter."

He flashed the light of his torch upon the wreck. A figure of a man in evening dress rose unsteadily from the ditch, screening his eyes from the light. Frampton recognized him at once; this was Pob Ted, who found it so difficult to get anything to do; Pob Ted, the leader of the drag.

"Are you badly hurt?" Frampton asked. "Is anyone hurt?"

"No, there's nothing the matter. But something's happened to this damned car," Pob said. "Funny thing. I can't get her to start. The ignition's konkt, or something."

He was unsteady in his gait. A sweet and strong smell of alcohol was diffused all round him. Frampton saw a little blood trickling down his face.

"I've been working at the self-starter the last half-hour," Pob went on. "Can't get a signal."

"Let's have a look," Frampton said. "It looks to me as though more than the ignition has gone. Are you all alone here?"

"Just like Jonah in the whale," Pob said.

Frampton turned the light on the wreck. Like most motor wrecks, it looked bad, because of the crumpling of the wings; but this one was bad; more than the wings had suffered. The left front wheel was bent to a V shape, and the fore part of the car was very nearly wrenched off the rest of it; the wind-screen had been torn off. It seemed to Frampton that Pob must have been flung through it.

"How did the car get in the ditch?" Frampton asked.

"Some damned chap must have put it there," Pob said. He

laughed in a crazy, weak way. "Some damned chap when I wasn't looking, what."

"That's the idea," Frampton said, thinking that this was a concussion case and should be treated in bed as soon as might be. "It wants a vet, this car," Frampton said. "You'll not start this car to-night. You'd better let me drive you home. Where d'you want to go?"

"I don't want to go without the car," Pob said. "It's my father's car. He doesn't let me drive this. It's only the ignition's got some grit on it; any grit's bad for ignition. If you'll give me a hand to start her, I'll be all right."

"The car's ruined," Frampton said. "Look. See for yourself. It'll cost a sink of monkeys to mend this car, if she can be mended. Jump into my car, and let me drive you home. Or, better still, get your father's driver to come out with you to look at the ignition."

"Old Bill Bailey will get her to start," Pob said. "Wonderful feller, Bill Bailey; and, of course, he knows this car."

"Come on, then; I'll drive you to him. Where is he to be found."

"He lives at the *Manor*, Stubbington," Pob said, "the same as me. You know, it's very funny, the car getting into that state. It must have had a push. You know, more I come to think of it, more it seems someone ran into me and didn't stop. Some boulder road-hog feller; lots of 'em on the road; no manners, no road sense. They hit a chap and go on."

"Well," Frampton said, "here's my car. You'd better sit still and not talk. You have had a bang, I should judge, even if you don't remember it."

He helped Pob into the seat beside him. "It's only a few miles," Pob said. "It's awfully decent of you to give me a lift like this."

He saw Frampton's face for an instant, as he took his seat. Frampton switched off the light as he took the wheel, but some memory was touched in Pob.

"I say," he said, "do I know you? I seem to have seen your face somewhere. I suppose I met you out hunting."

"One meets a lot of chaps out hunting," Frampton said.

"Yes, by Jove," Pob said, "one does meet a lot out hunting. I say, were you out the opening day? Tibb's Spirr Cross Day? We had a rare old score off that gunman. We laid a drag through his bally old cover. The chap's an awful bounder; a bolshie who makes guns; wants to stop hunting. Stinks of money, of course; all these chaps do. But we scored him off all right. I wonder, have you got a spot of brandy on you? Always carry brandy in a car myself. Would you mind just turning back and get me a spot of brandy? It's in the car; in the pocket of my car. A bottle, half-full of the best."

"I saw it all smashed to flinders," Frampton said. "Besides, I must go on. I've got an appointment."

"I say, what rotten luck," Pob said crossly. "You needn't keep an appointment at this time of night. I say," he said suddenly, "is this my car?"

"No," Frampton said, "it's mine."

"Well, I wish you'd let me drive to a pub; or let me drive."

"I'll drive, thanks."

"But I like driving."

"Not so much as I do."

"By Jove, I'm going to drive," Pob said. "I'm going back for the brandy." He grabbed at the wheel. As it chanced, Frampton had expected something of the sort and elbowed him off pretty hard. "I must get back to my car," Pob cried.

"I'm taking you there. You'll be there in a minute," Frampton answered.

After a time, Pob said:

"I wonder would you mind stopping? I rather think I shall cat."

Frampton stopped the car, Pob tottered out and was sick.

"I say," he said, "I wonder if you've a spot of brandy on you."

"I'll take you to some wonderful brandy in a few minutes," Frampton said.

"What's become of Pinkie?" Pob asked suddenly.

"Pinkie?"

"Yes. Pinkie-Punkie we call her. She was in the car with me."

"You mean, that she was in your father's car?"

"Yes, of course."

It gave Frampton a qualm, to think that he had left a corpse or wounded woman in that ruined car in the ditch. He had not examined the ruins thoroughly, in fact, he hadn't examined them at all. It was possible that the broken corpse of Pinkie-Punkie, or worse still, her suffering body, that might still be saved, did lie under the wreck there.

"You said you were alone. You said nothing was the matter," he growled. "Where had you been with Pinkie? Where were you coming from?"

"We'd been for a few cocktails."

"Then, she is lying under the car still. We'd better go back and fetch her."

He turned the car at a farm gate, and ran back. Pob told him about the emotional natures of Pinkie-Punkie and the Brass-Eye. "They were two of the best," he said.

Frampton was cursing himself for not having examined the wrecked car for other passengers.

"You're quite sure she was with you?" he asked.

"Yes, quite sure."

"How are you sure?"

"We were having a row."

"What were you having a row about?"

"It wasn't really a row; it was more a discussion, if you know what I mean, what we're to do for our next rag with the gun feller, you know, the bounder who was so rude to the Bynds, and turned the hounds out of Spirr, and had us up before the beaks. I said we'd get stink-bombs and stink him out of house and home. Feller's an awful swine. Had us up before the beaks. Imagine a chap having a chap up before the beaks for a rag. So I said, stink-bombs and stink him out. But Pinkie said, she and Brass-Eye were all for bed bugs. They'd got some bed bugs in London; they wanted me to put them in the feller's bed. Well, I mean to say; what?"

They reached the scene of the smash. Frampton left his car, but locked the ignition and took the key. He was not going to give Pob a chance to get away with it, just for a rag.

"She was sitting in front with you?" he asked.

"Yes, of course, cuddling me."

Frampton could only judge that she'd been hurled over the fence into the field beyond. He had read of such things. He did not believe that anyone had run into the car from behind. This young sot had been tearing along, hell-for-leather, with a girl alongside and a belly full of brandy; naturally he had gone bang into the ditch, at sixty or seventy miles an hour.

"Pinkie will be the far side of the fence," he thought, "with her silly head broken off its stalk."

However, there was no Pinkie there. No Pinkie had fallen across the hedge; nor could anybody have been flung through it. It was unlikely that any chariot of fire had descended to

translate the lady. It was certain that no lady, nor any part of a lady was in the ruins of the car.

"I seem to remember, now," Pob said, "that Pinkie said she'd get out and see Sarah, and then I should call at the cross-roads and pick her up."

"Which cross-roads?"

"Oh, some bally cross-roads, or other. I do wish you'd a spot of brandy. You saw how catty I was just now. A feller needs a spot of brandy after being catty. I say, will you go and pick up Pinkie?"

"But you don't know where."

"Yes, I do; at the cross-roads."

"Which cross-roads?"

"I say, you know, you are a oner for asking questions. There aren't so many cross-roads as all that."

"She'll have gone home, long ago," Frampton said. "What I recommend is for you to come and have some special 1811 brandy I've got."

"I say, have you really got 1811 brandy?"

"A little, for great nights."

"I say, I seem to have met you somewhere."

Frampton lured him to the car with the talk of brandy.

"I say," Pob said, "I'll drive. I know zackly where to find Pinkie."

"Brandy first, Pinkie later," Frampton said. "Wine always comes before women."

He took the wheel, and set forth. Pob made two attempts to take the wheel; one was unexpected and nearly put the car across the road.

"Where is the brandy?" Pob called.

Presently, at five minutes past midnight, Frampton pulled up at *Stubbington Manor*.

"How about that brandy?" Pob called.

"You'll want some of that," Frampton said, "when your father hears what's come to the car."

Getting out, he rang the door-bell vigorously. Pob in the car cried:

"Now we'll see who's going to drive."

However, the car did not respond. Frampton rang again, a lusty peal, and beat the knocker.

"There's something wrong with this igniton," Pob cried. "I can't get the thing to start."

"The petrol's turned off inside the bonnet," Frampton said.

"No? Is it really?"

He clambered out unsteadily, just as a man in night-gown and overcoat opened the door, which had been locked, chained, barred and bolted for the night.

"I've brought Mr. Pob home," Frampton said. "He's been in a car smash, close to the Stanchester cross-roads. His car is all in pieces there. You'd better warn the police and the A.A. people. It ought to have red lights. He's had a concussion and ought to have a doctor at once."

"Will you come in then, Mr. Edward?" the butler said.

Pob lurched unsteadily, but in the general direction of the door.

"I'm quite all right," he said, "but, Bill, I want a spot of brandy, just to settle me before I go on to Sarah. And I want you to look at the car. Ignition's gone."

Mrs. Method-Methodde appeared at the door, and called:

"Is that Ted? Where have you been, Ted? You're ever so late."

Frampton drove off. They could deal with their darling in their own way, he thought; he himself had had enough of him. He hurried home, and at once telephoned to the police, that

a big car was wrecked at the bend, and needed red lights upon it.

Not long after this, he received, by the post, a printed paper giving particulars of the sale of Stubbington Great Wood and the desirable residence of *Tittups House*.

There were photographs of *Tittups House*, and descriptions of its tennis-courts, gardens (kitchen, fruit and flower), and of the three hundred and fifty acres of magnificent timber, known as the Stubbington Great Wood. Frampton had been to *Tittups*, to return the Colonel's call, and knew it as a big, derelict, hideous, dilapidated Georgian mansion, with no bath-room for anybody, and hateful little attics for the servants. The Wood he knew to be one of the outlying spurs of the Waste; it was all on mean, sick soil, and bore scrub and brush, and many small, stunted oaks, which never looked well. A forester with a large fortune to spend might have made something of it, but Purple Tittup had never spent any money on it, having none to spend. He had lived on at the house, and had shot the Wood thrice in each season. Twice a year, the hounds had met at *Tittups*, and had then drawn the Wood. Now it was all to be sold.

"It's a rotten investment," Frampton thought. "No one can use a house like that. No one will take it; no one will bid for it. Still," he thought, "it will be going dirt cheap, with all the Wood. I'm not sure, that I won't put in for it, to settle the Hunt from hunting on this side of the valley for good and all. Why hadn't that Annual-Tilter swine the grace to apologise in Court, instead of talking his tommy-rot about everyone being free to follow foxes anywhere? Vermin, quotha; chaps like that are vermin, in this land."

It chanced that that day Frampton had planned to drive to Sulhampton, to see the glass in the Abbey windows.

It was a drive of some thirty-five miles from *Mullples*.

On leaving the Abbey, he turned towards the famous old Royalist tavern, *King Charles's Crown*, for lunch. He had been there before, more than once. While he was lunching, he suddenly stiffened at the sound of a familiar, cracked voice, saying:

"They give a feller a very sound pie here."

It was the Annual-Tilter in person, accompanied by his wife and another man, a rather big chap, with pop eyes and a heavy jowl. They took a table at some distance from him, near a window which looked on the street. They had not noticed him. They talked about what they were going to have for lunch, and how Millie had looked. The waitress took their orders, put one or two items on their table and then withdrew. Mrs. Annual-Tilter looked round, saw Frampton, looked hard, to make sure, and then with her hand made her husband look; all three looked. Frampton was aware of their stares; he stared back, and then, thinking that the chance was too good to miss, rose from his place, came over to their table, and said:

"You are Annual-Tilter, acting master of the Tunster. You were in charge, when your filthy dogs went through my bird sanctuary. Since you haven't had the grace to apologise, let me tell you that I'll stop your hunting in that part of Tatshire, if it costs me the last penny I've got. That's all I've got to say to you at present."

He turned his back upon them and walked back to his place. Sitting down, he stared, stare for stare, with his enemy, in whom he saw desire for battle checked by the knowledge that a scene would never do. He ate his cheese slowly, still staring at them. Mrs. Annual-Tilter said: "Outrageous." The pop-eyed man meditated war, but did not wage it. Frampton drank his coffee slowly, still staring. He had made them squirm a

little, he thought. He had made them Frampton-Mansell-conscious; they would remember the gun-fella in their prayers that night. When he had finished his lunch, and paid his bill, he stood up, nodded to them and strolled out.

"Now I see what to do," he said to himself. "This has been just like an answer to prayer. Now I'll make an offer for the Tittup ruin and all that filthy wood and put the Hunt out of all our side of Tatshire."

He had no intention of paying one penny more for that derelict property than the lowest price he could screw them down to. As he explained to the agents in Stubbington ninety minutes later, the house was rotten, there was dry rot in the roof and wet rot in the wainscots. The handles and hinges were worth half a quid, the marble mantelpiece in the drawing-room might fetch a quid; and he would give them a bob a ton for the bricks. As for the Wood, well, he only asked them to look at it. No one could use the house in its present state. It wasn't a dwelling-place. It couldn't be made into a school, nor a nursing-home, nor a mad house. The Wood was one long disease. He would offer them, and here he named his price, and they could take it or leave it.

They left it, with indignation, that night, but within the week they thought better of it. They had missed their chance, however, and had to take much less. Ten days later, the property was his. He owned the Tittups property. This was a matter of great cheer to him.

"See, my little Fram," he said, "you own *Tittups*, the seat of the fox-hunter, where Bahram, the great hunter, that great ass, used to live. You own the heart of the Tunster country, the sure find, the covert where the famous Tittup foxes lie. And now we'll have the hunters out of it forever."

He caused his lawyers to write a warning to the neighbour-

ing Hunts, that they were to keep out of Stubbington as out of Spirr. He hired a firm of house-breakers to put the derelict house out of the way. He caused an enterprising firm to wire the fences of the estate.

"I'll keep them out, the swine," he muttered.

There were four melancholy cottages on the Tittups Estate; he put these under a deferred sentence of death. The people who lived in them had nowhere else to go.

"And now," he said, "I'll really do what I only suggested to the angry ham. I'll make this a model community."

He had thought of it a good deal since he had seen how bitterly it had been resented. It was a maxim of his: "When you see these duds writhing, be sure that what you're doing is right; go on at it." He had thought of a lot of schemes, had drawn up several plans with estimates vouched for by Rolly, and was tempted to begin upon it at once.

Rolly came down, to go over the ground with him. He began to be excited about this child of his invention. A community of fifty homes, two recreation centres and a school seemed to him to be a great return to be had for money. He was not sure how far he could insist on the school being run on his own lines, but he thought of the children who might graduate from that school, all lovely athletes, all able to sing and to play instruments, all able to draw, to speak and to act. He read eagerly the many books describing the many ideal settlements founded since the industrial age began to rouse protesters. He thought that he saw the causes of the failures of most of these. They had attracted usually the wrong kind of artist and the deadly kind of prig. Well, he would make this place the home of his very best workers, and make his new gun here.

Rolly was eager about the scheme; he gave of his very best thought to the planning and prepared those drawings which

made such a sensation when exhibited. For a few days, just after the purchase of *Tittups*, Frampton felt that he had found again an interest in life.

He thought that it would annoy the local sportsmen if he advertised the forthcoming building in the Tittups estate. He, therefore, put up large posters in prominent places, to say that this was the site of the St. Margaret's Model Village or Garden Suburb. A part of the Waste at the top of the hill seemed to him to be necessary to the completion of his plan. By great good fortune, it was possible for him to buy this, too. He had a diviner down, to run out the springs. There was abundant water on the estate. He began to figure out the question: Could his new gun be made there? He had received a specimen or trial piece showing something of the new gun. He was eager to have it made close to where it had been devised.

"It'll make 'em squirm," he thought.

Even so, he hesitated; it was too big a plunge to take for fun.

One afternoon it chanced that he was talking at *Mullples* to young Dick Harold, about acting as art adviser to the Stubbington War Memorial Committee. It seemed that Colonel Tittup's death had re-opened this question of the War Memorial. The money was there; it had lain in the bank ever since 1919; and now that the old Treasurer, Tittup, was gone people, being reminded of it, felt that a new Committee should be formed and a Memorial raised. Dick Harold, as Editor, had printed some correspondence about it. Mr. Copshrews, the Rector of Stubbington, was strongly in favour; and Dick had suggested to Copshrews that Frampton would be a most useful adviser; "he knows everything about modern art and all the best artists; he's the chap to have." Copshrews had had misgivings about asking such a firebrand, but had suggested that the Committee, then being formed, should invite Frampton.

to come as adviser. Harold asked if he would consider the invitation.

"If the people really want me," Frampton said, "of course I'll come and do what I can. But I doubt that the people in these parts will want me."

"Oh, they want you in Stubbington," Harold said. "Stubbington isn't like the country. With you advising, we may get something really good."

At that moment, the telephone bell rang. It was the Works, eager to speak to him. Could he possibly come up to the Works at once; a most strange and interesting thing had happened? The line was not working very well; but after a time he learned what it was. Some picronoxyllethaline had given off its characteristic gas, noxytoxythanatophaline, although not exposed to any sudden rise of temperature.

This was the important thing, in fact a very important thing.

"Golly," Frampton said at once, "it's done that, has it? I'll come up at once. That may mean £100,000 clear profit, straightaway."

"At the least," the chemist said, "if we can spot the cause."

"How did it come about?" Frampton asked.

"We don't know," the chemist said. "But seven of the girls in No. C.P.N.L. room suddenly breathed a lot of N.T.T. and each of them had a characteristic reaction, that is, they went temporarily mad and bit eleven girls and a fireman. Of course, they're beginning to cool down now, but we'd be glad if you'd come up."

"I'll come up at once," he said.

"You seem to have important news," Harold said.

"Yes," Frampton said, "it may prove to be important. It may mean that we shall be able to get a very precious gas with-

out a frightfully costly middle process. I'll have to go up for it. I'll have to rush."

Harold had not seen Frampton in action before; he was, therefore, impressed to see him now. He was offered, and took, a lift as far as Stubbington. He judged later that Frampton was in the car, streaking to Shipton, to catch the express, within a minute of his laying down the telephone receiver. He was glad to leave the car in Stubbington, for Frampton went like the wind.

"Send me a wire if you make the express," he called.

"I shall make it," Frampton called; and did.

This was the kind of thing he most enjoyed; this made him function; this spurred up his imagination. Why had this P.N.L. given off its precious N.T.T.? He went through the possibilities and branchings of the case; all exciting. He did not care a twopenny rush for the seven young women, but the police and the Press would be probing, and it was important that neither should discover the cause of the discharge. They might be on the brink of a staggering secret which would revolutionise war. It might be possible to make the enemy population raving mad before the declaration of war, at a cost of sixpence a street; fifty pounds a city. Of course, the reaction was not lasting, as yet, but it might be made so. Imagine, anyhow, a little N.T.T. dropped on an enemy cabinet meeting, or into the members of a general staff, at some secret emergency meeting. A little scattered at a meet of the Tunsters might not be amiss.

He caught the express in good time. He was at the Works before they closed. In half an hour he had assumed control of the business, and had a fairy story out for the evening papers' late editions. He turned like a sleuth to the point at issue, the cause of the giving-off of the gas in this shed of the P.N.L.

The best of the chemists were with him, but it was his shrewd brain that narrowed the field of enquiry for them. When he had got them fired with his own enthusiasm, he visited the sick in the hospital. The seven were now nearly normal, and without any memory of what they had done under the influence of the gas. Those who had been bitten were not seriously hurt. He had a good way with his workers; nearly always they stood by him in a time of trouble; they did so now. His old father, who had been sorely pressed in his young days, had told him never to forget the text: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn."

"If men or women give you their service, see that you give them far more than the market rate, and you'll find your reward." He always had found his reward.

The chase of the secret held him in London for all one week; then for a second week; then for a part of a third. He gave no thought to *Mullples* during this time. This chase was serious; and had to be followed to the end. In the end, it was he who found the well-hidden, simple solution and showed how P.N.L. could be made to yield its N.T.T. almost without money and without price.

It was one of the happiest moments of his life; certainly the one happy moment since Margaret's death. It was a great moment, made all the happier by the gladness of his staff, who were present when the proof was made.

In that happiness, he thought:

"Why should not all my N.T.T. be made at St. Margaret's? The place could be built out of two years' of the savings made by this new process. We should have all that side of the Works brought into the country, farther from possible air attack; and I could develop my Garden City and my explosives plant together."

This was much too tempting to resist; he decided that it should be done. He would have the building pushed on, and the people moved in there towards the end of the following Winter, say at the end of February, when every day brought a change for the better in the weather, so that the people could be lured to country life through all a Summer, before the Winter taught them its drawbacks. He meant to make the place a success. He asked his people to meet him in the Hall of the Works, and told them what he hoped to do, if they would support him. He asked them to think it over and let him know what they thought about it; there was no hurry, but he would be glad to hear their views; he wanted only volunteers.

Having had a hard three weeks, he went down to *Mulples* for the week-end. Meeting the angry ham in Stubbington, he was cut dead by her, which he had not quite expected. In return for this mercy, he resolved to put up big notices on his property where the dwellers at *Coombe* would pass them ten times a week. The notices should run:

TO SKUNKS & FOX-HUNTERS
KEEP OUT.
THIS MEANS YOU.

But he was not quite satisfied with the wording; he felt that it could be made a little bitterer; would it not be neater to say:

SAY YOU.
ARE YOU A SKUNK?
OR ONLY A FOX-HUNTER?
ANYHOW
KEEP OUT OF HERE
AND STAY OUT

Somehow, that was a little too prolix; brevity was called for:

THE POLICE HAVE ORDERS TO ARREST ANY
FOX-HUNTING VERMIN FOUND CRAWLING HERE.

He could not resolve upon the wording; he thought of it for a long time, but inspiration did not fall upon him. Anyhow, notices of that kind should go up as soon as he could be satisfied. Meanwhile, a letter came to him from the Rector of Stubbington, asking him to be so very kind as to attend a meeting in Stubbington about the War Memorial. The letter said that the Members of the Committee hoped that he would give them the great benefit of his advice in any question which might arise concerning art and artists.

"Well, if they want my advice," he commented, "they shall have it. But I'm inclined to think that I shall only fall foul of some more of them."

As a maker of guns and explosives, he had seen a good deal of the War.

"The great enemy in war is mud," he used to say. "Mud on the battlefield, and the thicker mud in human minds."

Though he lived by war and the preparation for war, he loathed it, as the opportunity for the scoundrel. He had lost friends in the War, from several lands, and wished those men to be commemorated by a better Europe, which would be a public confession, that in killing those young men, she had followed cannibal gods. However, Europe had not been bettered; far from it; she had gone farther towards cannibalism.

Still, the young men of Stubbington who had died deserved a memorial, the very best that could be had. He would see that the best should be recommended for them. Somehow he felt that he was foolish to go to the meeting; he would only

make more enemies; these people knew nothing of art. He was fond of taking the views of country people on these topics; he went over to the *Adventure Inn* one day, to find what was thought there about a memorial. Hordiestraw was pointed in his remarks about it.

"Yes," he said, "I saw they was going to meet and talk about it. It's just as well they've waited till now. Seems to me they'll be just in time for the next war, if they keep on. What's the sense of putting up a War Memorial now? The poor chaps know now that they didn't end war, like they was told. They've made war certain, seems to me; another war, only worse, and not even so much hope in it as there was in the last. Well, if I was to go to the meeting, I'd say the best memorial they could put would be a statue to a statesman; any statesman, they'm all the same; not a pennorth of difference, seems to me; and under it I'd put a poem:

'What with my folly and my lies
My country's youth in glory dies;'

only he'd never see that I meant it sarcastic. He'd think I meant it as praise."

On the evening appointed, Frampton went to the Committee Meeting, which had been called in the hall of what was called the Guild House. It was a pleasant old Tudor room, with greenish ancient glass in the windows, and a fine timber roof, with carved, painted and gilded rafters and wall-pieces.

He was met at the door by Harold, who introduced him to the people who had already arrived: Lady Susan Drachm, a tough-looking old woman, in a dirty, whitish mackintosh and riding-boots; Miss Pauntly, an erect, fresh-coloured handsome old maid, with very beautiful grey hair; Mr. Urch, a grocer

and provision dealer; Mr. Ock of Font and Vespers; Mr. Fence, builder and decorator. He had spoken with each of these, when the Rector came in to explain that he was sorry to be late. Harold introduced Frampton to him, and the Rector spoke some words of welcome. Then he took his seat as Chairman and said:

"I don't think we need wait for Captain Connar-Downs; the hounds have been out at Wicked Hill to-day."

People smiled and the meeting began. The Rector explained how earlier Committees had been unable to agree, how the matter of the Memorial had been shelved and forgotten, and how it had happened that the matter came to be discussed by them now.

He recapitulated the various suggestions made by the past Committees. They were:

1. A water system for that part of Stubbington known as Budd's End, which had no water nearer than Joneses Fountain and had to carry from there daily.

2. A window in the church.

3. A stone inscribed with names, to be in the church or in the churchyard.

4. A recreation room.

5. A playing field, with a pavilion and some endowment for the equipment of games.

6. A monument in the Market Place.

7. A cross at the cross-roads outside the town, where the Stubbington Cross had once stood.

8. The figure of an angel, to stand pointing to a list of the fallen in the Market Place.

"Now that we are starting afresh," he said, "with a new Committee, I hope that we may reach agreement. We have now the great benefits of knowing the Memorials put up else-

where, and of having with us Mr. Mansell, of *Mullples*, who has kindly consented to advise us, when necessary, in artistic matters. Mr. Mansell has the name of having done more than almost any living man to encourage living artists, and I have much pleasure in welcoming him here to-night."

As he ceased speaking, a man who had been following with impatience rose to his feet, and said:

"As a practical builder, may I say a few words? I won't keep you a minute. I was on the old Committees. I'm one of the few here that was. The old Committees came to nothing because they were not practical; they was anything but practical. There was a lot of talk about artistic and what-not, but sense was the last thing I found among them. First they would have this and then they would have the other, and as a result they got nothing. To give an instance, now, I told them of a reputable firm well used to putting up War Memorials. I won't mention names, but I might say he's put up more War Memorials than almost any two firms; that shows the experience they have. You can't beat experience in a practical question, that's well known. This firm had offered to put them up a solid masonry plinth, with Britannia weeping, or a model white marble with the names in gold surrounded by a flower-bed, for £287. 10. 0. But Colonel Purple Tittup had said that they didn't want any of that sort of humbug in Stubbington, but a roll of honour under the colours in the church; but when they looked into it, his roll of honour according to the estimates came to over four hundred pounds. They ought to be advised by that and cut your coat according to your cloth and go by the advice of people who do know what it is they're dealing with. I hope that now that this question comes to be settled it will be by practical men."

Another member, who had said "Hear, hear," several times

during this speech, now rose and said, that in one way it was a good thing that Stubbington had waited for so long, for now it could profit from the mistakes of other parishes.

"I've been," he said, "I've been about a lot of England, following my business, and I've seen a lot of so-called War Memorials. They've been two classes in the main, as you might say: the class the people have had some say in, which is what they think their dear ones would have liked, and the class foisted on them by people who can't be satisfied with what their own country produces, but go bringing in all sorts. They think these things are very artistic, but if you'd heard the complaints I've heard about some of those things, complaints which can't get into the papers, mind you, you'd agree that these matters are best left to practical men."

Several people came in here; indeed they came in at intervals all through the evening. In a lull, Frampton asked the Chairman if he might speak, and having been asked to do so, said:

"My work has taken me over most of England since the War; I suppose I have seen hundreds of War Memorials. I've studied them carefully. I have photographs of hundreds of them, over eleven hundred, certainly; my books of them are here at your service. Most of these Memorials are works of dignity, as all works must be which proceed, as these do, from very deep feeling. Some of the best of them, all the very best of them, are works of art. I do not doubt that you in Stubbington want your Memorial to be among the very best in the land, a real work of art."

A little, excitable, pale-faced man, with side-whiskers and very bright eyes said that they wanted the best value their money could buy, but it must be what would seem the best value to those whose money it was; they did not want any of this foreign stuff that was coming over, not in Stubbington.

The grocer, who was portly, rosy in the gill, and with a reek of cloves about him, which cloves he chewed to disguise the smell of alcohol, said that the last speaker had hit it.

"Don't be too artistic; give us something that we can understand, Mr. Mansell," he said.

Mr. Ock, of Font and Vespers, said, that as many memorials had to be in public ways, the man in the street was the best judge; the plain taste was the best. You could not fool the people. Put up the dozen competing designs, and have a plebiscite, and you'd find the people reject the artistic thing, so-called, in favour of the thing they understood.

"You say you can't fool the people," Frampton said. "That is not the whole quotation. The sage said: 'You can't fool *all* the people *all* the time.' But the life of any successful politician will show you, as the sage said, that you can fool them all for some of the time. But we are not thinking of fooling the people, but of honouring brave men, who died in misery, so that we might live more quietly, and to do that, we ought to get and give the very best obtainable."

"Yes, as long as it can be understood," the grocer said.

It occurred to Frampton suddenly that he had seen this man behind the counter of a big and prosperous store in Stubbington.

"Sir," Frampton said, "if the Queen were to come into your store and ask to taste some biscuits, would you ask her which biscuits she understood, and then try whether she understood them properly? You wouldn't do anything of the sort. You'd get the most expensive biscuits in your store, the ones you yourself long to be always eating but which only millionaires can really afford, wouldn't you now?"

There was a laugh at this; the grocer laughed, too.

"In the long run, that is the only thing that survives, the very

best," Frampton said. "It is the only thing that can move all people all the time. You ask the curator of any gallery or museum what exhibitions are successful; he will tell you, the best exhibitions, the shows of the masters. You here, in Stubbington, want a work of art. A work of art proceeds from the mind of a rare type of man; not from a business firm of men, however experienced, or however practical. The artist may be thirty years ahead of his time; his work may seem strange indeed to one not accustomed to the play and the leap of intellect. This town has had no work of art added to it for two hundred and forty years, when you put up your Corn Exchange. You must be prepared for a bit of a shock, after so long an abstinence. There seems to be unanimity here, that you want a work of art. But am I right about that? Is that decided? Is there no question of a water supply or a playing-field?"

Lady Susan Drachm, who had been watching him with disfavour, put in here, with:

"I didn't hear that we had decided against a water supply or a playing field. It wasn't put to the vote."

"I'm sorry to have mistaken," Frampton said.

"It hasn't been put to the vote," the Rector said, "but I will gladly put it to the meeting, that the field of enquiry may be limited. After all, we have invited Mr. Mansell here to advise us about matters of art, and he must, therefore, have assumed that the field of enquiry had already been limited. Shall I put it?"

"It ought not to be put with so many of the Committee away," Lady Susan objected. "Not all the people likely to be in favour of the playing field are here yet."

"They ought to be here," Mr. Harold said. "We're the Committee; we're more than the necessary quorum; we have every

right to decide. They've all been called to the meeting and haven't come to it."

"I quite agree," several voices said. "We're the Committee, as we are."

"I move that we take the vote on it," Mr. Ock said.

"I second Mr. Ock," Mr. Edge said.

The Rector looked round the room, put it to the vote of the meeting, that the Memorial should take the form of a work of art, not a water-supply, nor a playing-field. The motion was carried.

"That clears the air a bit," the builder said. "That's the first practical thing that's been done on this Committee since it first sat, along about 1919."

Lady Susan said nothing, but sat with a hardened face, surveying, now one, now another of the company with dislike.

The door opened; two men came in together, a little, wizened, stooping figure, with keen, darting eyes and shaggy eyebrows, and an elderly man in clerical dress, whose face reminded Frampton of a grizzled lion. The old man flung off his overcoat; he was wearing a dinner-jacket.

"Sorry to be late, Rector," he said. "Carry on; how far have you got?"

"We've just decided to have a work of art, not a water supply or playground."

"I knew you'd get into trouble without me," the old man said. "Now you're for it. A work of art, eh? Poor old Stubington, condemned to a work of art. Who is going to do the said work? Who've you got there? Tom, I suppose. Tom? Why the devil Tom? He knows nothing about it; do you, Tom? Tom's wife and daughter do all Tom's work, that's well known."

As Tom did not seem to mind, Frampton saw that the old

man was a favoured being there. He put him down as a naval officer.

"Who are these newcomers?" he whispered to Harold.

"Admiral Sir Topsle Cringle," the man whispered, "eighty-four. The other is Reverend Mr. Holyport, retired clergyman."

"Well, come on, come on," the Admiral said. "I'm not going to leave Tom in charge of the ship; not if I know it. Who else is here? Why isn't Budd here? Where's Bynd? Oh, his leg's still game. Captain Tocque-Roger said he was coming. I don't know half the people here and I know all the rest a lot too well."

"I propose the Admiral should submit a design," Miss Pauntley said.

"You propose to me?" the Admiral said. "By George, that's something at my time of life."

There was a general laugh. Frampton remembered now that he had heard of a very brave thing done by the Admiral as a young lieutenant, while at sea in a squadron in the North Atlantic. He had taken charge of a boat in very wild weather at nightfall, and gone off after a man who had fallen from aloft; had picked him up and had then, with great difficulty, contrived to save the boat. It had been long talked of in the Navy as one of the best bits of work ever done, in the kind of sea then running. The Admiral had sent for him next day and complimented him before the Flagship's company.

"Now," the Rector said, "we've decided that the Memorial is to be a work of art. Shall we now try to decide where it is to be? When we have decided that, it may be easier to decide what form the work of art should take."

There was a lull, while people looked from face to face, or drew figures on the paper in front of them.

A man rose, and said that there were many in Stubbington

who said that the Memorial ought to be in the parish church. He was sure that many there thought the same, but he hoped he would not be considered slighting to the Church, when he said that many of the men commemorated were not members of the Church. There were many dissenters of different congregations in Stubbington, as well as a good many Roman Catholics. He dared say that half the men serving from Stubbington had not been Churchmen, and that, therefore, a Memorial in the church would be resented by the non-Church members. He was not a Churchman himself, and hoped that the church would not be insisted on.

Mr. Harold said, that in a census of congregations undertaken by his newspaper the year before, it had been shown that rather more people attended the various chapels in the town than the parish church. This quite bore out the statement of the last speaker.

Lady Susan said that the Church was the centre of the community, however much some had strayed from it, and that a window in the church was certainly to most people the most fitting Memorial that could be devised. It might even lead back some of those that had strayed; but it would at least teach them that the Church is established by law and stands for England.

The Admiral said that the only windows in Stubbington church not already stained, were the two in the Lady Chapel, which would never be seen, or hardly ever. The Rector said that there was that great objection. He hesitated a little and added that the late incumbent had at his own expense put up a stone to the memory of communicants who had fallen. This could be seen in the north transept. He felt that the main Memorial should not be in the church.

The grocer said that the best possible site in all Stubbington

was the triangular piece at the junction of the roads, the island-site, as it was called. Mr. Ock said that that was the best site. Lady Susan said that it was not so good a site as the Market Square, which was much bigger, clearer, and in all ways better for something that had to be looked at. Mr. Ock replied that the Market Square was too small already on market days for its original purpose as a market. Mr. Edge said that even on other days it was much too small for the numbers of cars that parked there. Any further encroachment on it would be a disaster.

Mr. Holyport suggested that something should be let into the wall of the Corn Exchange, which faced the Market Square. A wreath, surrounding a bronze relief, with a plaque of names below it, would look very well there, and be plainly seen by all in the Market Place.

"But you couldn't do that with the Corn Exchange," Frampton said. "It is a masterpiece, by Wren; you could not put an excrescence on Wren's façade."

A big man, with a heavy face, said that living people had every right to alter old work according to modern requirements; but that in his view, the Memorial ought to be on the other side of the Market Square, in the middle of the three shops; and that the middle shop should have its face remodelled so as to take it. The Rector said at once that any such scheme would be far more costly than they could afford.

The debate ranged up and down over possible and impossible sites. One or two minor members of the Committee, who had come in late, asked that the question of a water-supply to Budd's End should be debated; one said that he had the offer of a very good playing-field, which would only have to be levelled a bit to be perfect for any game, as well as being on

the river-bank, so that it could be used for swimming. These were told that those points had been ruled out, and the question now was, where the work of art should be put. They raised a protest against this, saying that they represented a large element in Stubbington, who would be indignant to find their wishes overruled. The Chairman said that the matter had been put to the Committee and voted against; it was, therefore, out of order to try to raise it again.

When most of the sites had been proposed, a man from the back of the room, sitting in shadow, said that he could not understand why no one had mentioned the open space in front of St. Hilda's Chapel in Budd's End. It was an open space to which hardly anybody ever came and nobody ever bothered about. It was near some of the worst slums in Tatshire, which was saying a good deal, and was, therefore, an ideal spot in which to put a Memorial to men who had died in the hope of bettering the world, and putting an end to war and slums and the competitive commerce which made both. He proposed a statue of Jesus weeping in front of the disused Hilda's Chapel, Budd's End. He rose from his place and came down past them. There was tense silence as he passed the Chair. He was a lame man, with only one arm, and face all writhed with suffering. Dick whispered to Frampton that he was one of the survivors from one of the torpedoed hospital ships.

"I don't think my mates want any memorials from you," he said, and went out.

Mr. Quart said: "I'm coming along to give you a lift home, Jack," and went out with him.

There was a murmur of pity and condolence after they had gone. Then someone said that no one had made a better suggestion than the island site at the triangle. It was a good site, and one which nine out of ten of the people of Stubbington

passed every day, and one by which all traffic had to go slow. It could hardly be bettered. He knew of no place in Tatshire so good.

There was a pause in the debate here; people fidgeted and whispered.

Frampton said: "You've asked me to come here to advise. I'm not a member of the Committee and do not like to speak unless spoken to; but might I ask if anyone has a prejudice against the bridge? It is the main approach to Stubbington. If you had a figure, one on each side, at the approach to the bridge, you would have something unique in England; I mean, the far end of the bridge, where people see the town behind the bridge."

A speaker waited till the chatter died down a little, and then said that he was sure that he for one welcomed Mr. Mansell as a neighbour, but that Stubbington had always been accustomed to manage her own affairs, and it seemed to him incongruous that a stranger, not a member of the Committee, had been asked in to make suggestions. However, the suggestion had been made, and he would like to suggest to Mr. Mansell, in reply, that the bridge lay outside the town, outside the walls, in a place where not one citizen in fifty would or could see it. It might be agreeable to tourists coming in in motor-cars but the figures there would give everybody of the town the feeling that the War Memorial had been turned out of doors.

Frampton was about to reply to this, when a woman rose. She was a comely woman, with a very clear, ringing voice.

She said that the last speaker had voiced something which had occurred to a good many of them. Stubbington was an old town, well-used to managing her own affairs, and many of her citizens could not understand why one with no association with

the district had been called in to advise in this matter, especially as the person in question had done so much to upset the good fellowship and sportsmanship in which we used to live here. The men of this district did not give their lives so that barbed-wire fences might be put round coverts.

She sat down. Frampton looked at her with interest, and was about to reply, when the Admiral struck in with:

"By George, though, I'm all for Mr. Mansell advising if it's a matter of a work of art. What the devil do we know about works of art here? Look at us, I ask you; me and that old ruffian Tom, and this wise chap here, Harold. We may make runs on a slow wicket, but by George, art's not our subject."

He made them laugh at this, and made it unnecessary for Frampton to reply. The Rector said that he was sorry that people were objecting to Mr. Mansell's presence. He had been invited by the Committee to advise, and had very kindly consented to come there. His suggestion about figures on the bridge might be considered.

Miss Pauntley rose and said that the suggestion about the figures, she supposed that Mr. Mansell meant statues, at the bridge-end ought to be debated. The bridge had been an old one until the last few years, but the old one had been too inconvenient and had been swept away. The new one was very bald and bare. She was there that morning, thinking how bare and dull it looked.

Mr. Quart, who had now returned, said that they weren't there to decorate bare places, but to commemorate the fallen. There were loud "Hear, hears" at this. He went on to say that he had had, and Stubbington had had some experience of decorating, in the recent past, when the body called the Sons of the pre-Raphaelites got leave to paint the roof of the Guild House where they were sitting. He had never seen such figures

of fun. It had cost them pounds in whitewash, covering the things. He was a plain man, and if that was art, he needed no more of it. It was quite true what was said, that figures on the bridge would not be seen. The end of the bridge was outside the town. The town faced the other way, he might say, and not twenty windows of the town could command the view of figures there. As for the natives of the town, they would hardly cross the bridge one day in seven. What plain people wanted was a stone in a public place with a list of the names.

Frampton whispered to Harold:

"Who is the lady who got hot about the barbed-wire?"

Dick whispered: "Mrs. Ruddy Verge." Frampton nodded, with the mental comment: "*J'en suis vierge.*"

The attendant, who looked to the cleaning of the room in which they sat, came in with a sheet of paper, on which he had pencilled a telephone message. The Rector called for silence, and read that: Mr. Method-Methodde, the Member for that part of South Tatshire, would be with them in a few minutes. He suggested that the Committee should mark time for those few minutes. The Committee agreed, and broke up into little groups. Frampton moved over to the Rector.

"Tell me, Rector," Frampton asked, "are you related to the painter that was?"

"Yes, the painter was my uncle, though I never met him," the Rector said. "He was dead before I was born."

"Have you any of his work?" Frampton asked.

"I? No," the Rector said. "I'm one of those brought up to regard my uncle as not quite the sort of uncle that a nephew should be proud of. He may have been a genius, but he was a man of no principle and of unfortunate excess."

"Well, but Rector," Frampton said, "I think I must stand

up for your uncle. You say he'd no principle. How about the principle of Beauty?"

"What d'you mean by Beauty, Mr. Mansell?" the Rector asked.

"I'm not good at definitions," Frampton said, "but might we call it, the quality which heightens our sense of life, when perceived in anything?"

"I must say that I am quite unable to find anything of that sort in the work of that dreadful man," the Rector answered. "I admit that he had talents; the world has decided that; of course, the question whether a man has talent is something which the world decides; the world judges the point and none may appeal. But whatever his talents may have been, they were blinded and nullified by habits of excess."

"But artists are men of excess," Mansell said. "They live in overwhelming excitement, and when the world doesn't give them commissions to keep that excess boiling out into their work all the time, they seek equivalent wherever they can get it. They drink and they fly over the traces, because they are men of excess. Thank heaven they are, I say. I've got a little portrait by your uncle. It's one of the finest things I've got. You know, facially you're rather like him."

The Rector looked as though he would have his face lifted as soon as he was in funds.

The door opened; Mr. and Mrs. Method-Methodde came in. Mrs. Methodde was ambitious for her husband; she took a lot of pains, but was not intelligent; Mr. Methodde was ambitious for his wife, did not take many pains and was not intelligent. They were frequently photographed together, gardening in their rock-garden. Their nicknames were Ducky and Twee; it did not much matter which was which.

"Oh, Rector," Mrs. Methodde began, in the gushing manner

usual to her, "oh, my dear Rector, can you forgive us for being so disgracefully late. We have broken all the speed limits and all the traffic regulations to get here."

"I'm so glad you were able to come," the Rector said. "I think you know all here. We've decided to have a work of art, and are now just deciding where to put it. Shall we go on from there?"

"Oh, I am so glad we aren't too late," Mrs. Methodde said. "Is this Mr. Mansell of *Mullples*? Oh, Mr. Mansell, what will you think of us? We have been dying to have you to lunch. But you know what a Member's life is, don't you? The House sits and sits, and he is never able to get away. It will be too delicious if you will come to lunch with us sometime."

As Frampton judged that he had been avoided by them of set purpose, he bowed, but said nothing, except that it would be delicious.

"Oh, I am so glad that you have decided to have a work of art," Mrs. Methodde cried to the Committee. "And now, will you let us take our places. Admiral, I want you to let me sit next you, and Twee the other side of you."

As they took their places, Frampton produced a portfolio. The Rector said that they had better get on with the next point, where the Memorial was to go. They decided, in a few minutes, that by much the best place was the triangular island-site.

"We've decided on a work of art, and we've decided on the place for it," the Rector said. "Now the real debate begins. What are we to put up? I have to tell you that the sum of money at our disposal, three hundred and sixty pounds odd, has been increased since we came into this room by an anonymous donor—please do not ask me for the name; it must be kept secret—to four hundred pounds. For that sum we can do much."

"I wonder," Frampton said, "I wonder, Rector, if I might be allowed to say a few words here, in my momentary capacity as adviser?"

"Certainly; do," the Rector said.

Frampton rose with his portfolio.

"I have here," Frampton said, "a portfolio of some fifty or sixty of the best of the smaller War Memorials in this country. It excludes all the social service memorials, such as water supplies or playing fields, but includes some of what you might call garden shrines."

He produced his portfolio, which was a remarkable collection.

"How did you get this book?" Mrs. Methodde asked. "I mean, is it published? I haven't seen it anywhere."

"It isn't published," he said. "But the country was stirred by its losses in the War and showed deep feeling in many of its designs. I took the trouble to collect photographs of all that I could hear of, and when the result seemed good, I went down to see the place and had good photographs taken. Wherever I could, I learned the cost of each Memorial; the figures are very interesting to me; so much good work was given free. I have a couple of other portfolios at home, not quite so good as these, but good."

"After all," Lady Susan said, as she sniffed above the designs, "four hundred pounds isn't quite the Bank of England. We have to cut our coat according to our cloth. We can't afford anything out of the way."

"Why not?" Frampton asked. "There are scores of young geniuses in this land, eager to give of their best."

"We don't want genius in Stubbington," Mr. Quart said. "Thank God, we're plain folk in Stubbington."

"You know them better than I do," Frampton said, "but

in this case the plain folk are not quite plain folk, but sorrowing humanity; they demand the very best that they can get, in memory of the extremity of their loss."

"I must say that I agree with Mr. Quart," a member said. We don't want any medical students coming round our War Memorials with green paint, as they say they do in London. We want an art that we can understand. It seems to me, that if we have a local War Memorial, we ought to employ local talent. I'm a builder myself, and it don't beseem me to push my own wares; but a lot of local men could put up a simple stone with the names on and tidy it all round a bit, and have something over for a supper to the poor on Armistice Night. All these memorials in this book, Mr. Mansell, are a lot above us."

"In what way above? I don't quite see."

"They aren't the sort of thing people would like to have about."

"But people do like to have them about. In some villages and towns they're very proud of them. In one or two, they have even found that their War Memorial has given them a kind of fame. People come there from distances to see the Memorial. Just look at page thirty-three in that book, will you? That's it—the Memorial at Naunton Crucis, a little place, with a very fine village cross, one of the best still standing. They got young Dick Pilbrow to do a marble for the great spring of water just opposite the Cross. That marble with the low relief is the result. It loses a full half of its beauty in a photograph; but you go over to Naunton and look at it. It's only forty-odd miles. If it doesn't take your breath away, I'll be sorry for you. People go from all over the Continent to see that marble. It made young Pilbrow famous all over the world. He's in America now, doing a fountain for one of their colleges."

"Yes, but I don't think that Stubbington would quite approve of marble figures with quite so few clothes," Mrs. Methodde said. "Four hundred pounds may not be very much, but it should be enough to provide the figures, if we must have figures, with decent suitings. After all, we insist upon it, even at seaside resorts, and I feel that art ought not to have a lower standard in these matters than the ordinary rank and file of everyday people."

Frampton looked at her with a kindling eye; he restrained his instinct to go for her. He heard comment of a slighting kind as the view of the Naunton fountain went down the table.

"Well, we don't want anything like that," was the most favourable remark which came to him.

"I want to add," Frampton said, "that Pilbrow gave his work on that marble for love of the job. It was his first big chance to show what was in him; and luckily it led to other big chances being given to him. He has, therefore, grown to his capacity. Think how glad you would be, if you could set free another Pilbrow. It is all in that one phrase: 'Setting free.' Nations don't alter. Men have the same kind of art power, year after year, century after century. Only in one century they will turn the power to building and decorating cathedrals, and in another to designing petrol pumps and mascots for motors. The power is there. All that is needed is a discrimination, and then a wise encouragement."

"I don't call it much encouragement," Lady Susan said, "to put up a marble fountain for nothing."

"It was just Life itself, he told me, after three years of neglect and starvation."

"Well," the Admiral said, "this fountain is all very well for Naunton Crucis, as they have that great spring of water there;

the fountain suggests itself. I'm afraid that nothing of this kind would suit our triangle at the cross-ways. Tom here suggests a stone with the names, and some sort of flower-bed with evergreens. Does that seem a fair proposal?"

There was general approval of the stone with names and a sort of flower-bed. It would be the very thing; and in the space around it people could lay wreaths. Mr. Fence and Mr. Ock said that a plain brick plinth with marble facings was the sort of thing, surrounded by a grass plot fenced with chain swags. This was welcomed by most. The Rector asked Frampton what he, as adviser, thought of it.

Frampton said: "I have seen a great many Memorials of the kind; nobody would want to look at one of them a second time. I'm all for trying to make a Memorial here that people will come to from great distances to see. Why not have a bronze figure, or a marble upon your plinth? You know that a town in France or Italy, of half the size of this, would have a bronze or a marble, done with grace and go, too, as a matter of course. We are richer and, in many ways, wiser than any generation of Englishmen who have lived here before us. But we are leaving less to future ages than any generation. The Middle Ages built you and left you their church and chapel. The Tudors left you the Jennynghes Almshouses. The Jacobean left you Tom's Dovecot. Charles the Second left you the Market Building. The Georgians left you the main body of your town. But what are you leaving to those who follow you, but some underground drains and overhead pylons? Here you have a chance to get busy, rout out a genius and lay great bases for posterity; yes, I say, really great. It only needs an act of will.

"Why should you not make this Memorial the very finest one in England? You come to it late. You can profit by all

that have failed and all that have succeeded. You know now what to avoid, and what to better if you can. You, Admiral, you wouldn't let your ship be beaten in any manœuvre or any point of smartness. You, Mr. Methodde, won't let it be said that North Tatshire Memorials are better worth a visit than those in your constituency. Why not let me get busy for you and get a few designs prepared? It won't cost you anything; it won't commit you to anything. If you don't like any of them, I can try again. I know that I know men who would do memorable work for you."

He spoke to deaf ears and doubting minds. A member rose and said that most practical men had had experience of artists. He had seen some of their work, which papers who ought to have known better had cracked up. He would be sorry to see any of such work in Stubbington. It looked more like raving lunatics' work than the work of sane men, if you asked him. He hoped that plain men in Stubbington would not be led away by talk about art into making their old town ridiculous. He had seen a so-called portrait of a lady done by one of these artists. It was said by the papers to be a piece of mordant truth, whatever that might mean. It had made him and his wife feel sick all afternoon. He hoped old Stubbington would show plain English common sense in this matter. There was a good deal of applause.

This was an opportunity for Mrs. Methodde, who rose to say her say. She had spoken a good deal, or rather, had cooed frequently. Someone had told her that her way of speaking had a caressing quality that was very persuasive. This had confirmed her in her belief that she was the one to woo an audience to vote for Methodde and English Common-sense.

"While we are all debating and declaiming," she cooed, "might I tell the Committee of a Memorial which I saw in

Normandy last summer? I was motoring with my husband, and stopped for tea at an inn at a little town; you know those charming French inns, with the faint smell of cider. It was in the *Place*, and just opposite was *l'Eglise*. After tea, I said to my husband, we must just look into *l'Eglise*; there may be some old stained-glass in it; so we went in. It was very damp and felt as though it wasn't much used, but in the Lady Chapel there were two *drapeaux*, the *tricolores*, of course, and underneath, the most beautiful War Memorial I have ever seen. It was a big marble reading-desk of a dark marble. On the desk was a big marble book open. I suppose the book was as big as a big atlas. It was all white marble and made with a roll or ripple in it exactly like the roll that you see in the leaves of an open book. The leaves were inscribed in black with the names of the fallen, and all those who had been *décorés* were in gold. It was so simple and so dignified. It was a book of fame. I was simply struck all of a heap, I don't mind confessing it. I couldn't help saying: "There is a book who runs may read.' I haven't seen anything like it in any English church. But now that we are a Committee to settle what Stubbington is to have, I simply have to tell you how I felt. My husband was as much impressed as I was. I said to him this morning: "There is your Memorial for you.' Only have it in the open street, not a dark chapel, and place the desk so that all who read the roll will have to kneel to do so."

"You mean, in fact, that the Memorial should be a kind of sheltered *prie dieu*?" the Rector said.

"Yes. Something simple, like a church lych-gate, to screen the volume from rain or snow; then the desk inside the shelter, with a slab on which people would kneel."

"I think Mrs. Methodde's suggestion is the very thing we're all groping for," Mr. Ock said, "if I may say so."

Mr. Quart and Mr. Tom spoke in support. The Admiral seemed perplexed. Mr. Methodde was in deep whispered discussion with Mr. Holyport, about some other matter connected with Jennynge's Charity. The devil ever at Frampton's elbow, now gave him a jog. It was wanton of the devil and weak of Frampton to yield to him without at least a struggle, but he was angry with Mrs. Methodde, her person, her voice, her manner, her clothes and her sense of beauty.

"Do you remember," he asked, "if there was a marble velvet cushion under the book?"

"No, there wasn't," she said, "I'm sure of that. Do you recognise the place from my description? But I'm quite sure there was no cushion. A cushion would have spoiled it, I think; don't you? It would have made it unsimple, don't you think? And that is what I love so; simplicity."

The devil gave Frampton another jog, to which he responded.

"I'm surprised there wasn't a cushion," he said; "a white velvet marble cushion with dints in it. The roll on the pages made me expect a cushion, with a dog or a lion or something curled up on it, or weeping or something."

The words fell upon a room which somehow had fallen silent and attentive to receive them. He was gazing at Mrs. Methodde with relish of the effect of his sarcasm. She was not very quick at seeing what he meant. She was the Member's wife, sitting, as she supposed, among friends, among whom her opinions counted. Was this interloper, the dreadful gun-man from *Mullples* laughing at her?

The Admiral said: "Well, that seems the best suggestion yet: a sort of praying desk, with a book of names. And a marble book wouldn't wear out in a hurry."

"I'm afraid it wouldn't," Frampton said. "Why not a real

book, with metal pages, bearing the names engraved upon them; and get the Rector and Choir to come once a week to turn the page, with a prayer or a hymn. They do something of the sort in one or two places; and the effect is very noble."

"In the open air the pages would rust, and in this climate the Rector and Choir would get wet, two times out of three," Mr. Quart said.

"The book is to be screened," Frampton said, "and the Rector and Choir could come in mackintoshes."

"I'm afraid the Stubbington boys would soon have the movable pages out of the covers," Mr. Tom said. "Boys will be boys."

"Boys will be very decent fellows," Frampton said, "if it is put to them to be so. It would be quite easy to hinge the metal plates beyond the strength of boys."

"As to that, sir," a builder said, "you forget that slabs of zinc or copper would have a very mean effect."

"I did not mention zinc or copper," Frampton said. "I said metal, meaning memorial bronze."

"Not many in Stubbington would know what that is, sir," the man said. "They'd think it was something out of the iron-monger's shop. But marble is a precious stone to them. They know marble costs money; and they know it's the thing for graves and that; a bit of white marble that gleams."

The building party muttered: "Hear, hear." They knew that it was the thing for graves.

"I wonder, Rector," the Admiral said, "if we could put this matter to the vote and then I could get away. That is, if it has to come to the vote."

"I think we could put it to the vote," the Rector said, looking round the table. "Proposed by Mrs. Methodde, that the

Memorial should take the form of a screened *prie dieu*, bearing a book of the names . . .”

“A marble book of the names,” Mr. Quart said.

“A marble book, sir,” the others added.

“We could discuss the form of the book later,” the Rector said. There came a loud cry of “Marble,” from all over the room. “Bearing a marble book of the names,” the Rector amended. “Anybody second the proposal?”

Yes, a lot of people seconded the proposal.

“Seconded by Admiral Sir Topsle Cringle,” the Rector said. “Those in favour? Contrary? Carried. The Committee decides, therefore, that Mrs. Methodde’s scheme be adopted.”

“Thankee,” the Admiral said. “Now I can get away. Evenin’, Billie; evenin’, Member; ’night, Rector.”

He rose with the alertness of a young man, and was out of the room in a twinkling.

“I wonder,” Frampton said, “if I may have my book of photographs. I’ll say good night, Rector. I’ll have no truck with your marble book. It would be a mean design, even in a bathroom. You’d do better to have the pages of the Army pay-rolls, with the poor chaps’ names crossed out. Who is going to design your marble book? May I ask that?”

He had meant to go, but a thought had struck him, and he waited to hear what they said.

“I’m sure that Mr. Ock, with his wide experience, could put us on to a good ecclesiastical and memorial firm, who would do that for us,” Mr. Quart said, “or if not, Mr. Brix would, I’m sure.”

“A good ecclesiastical and memorial firm,” Frampton said. “Who will do a marble book for you. And that is the utmost you can do, in the way of grateful feeling, for the chaps who went west in the War. Supposing an angel were to come here

from Paradise; you needn't look shocked, he won't come; only suppose that he did come and that you had to show him round. Well, you show him your school, and let him have a look at the drains and the city dump, and then you show him your marble book. He will say: 'What in wonder is this?' You will say: 'It's a Memorial to our friends who were killed in the War. Of course, we didn't take any trouble about it. We were just a Committee who handed it over to a good ecclesiastical and memorial firm who does that kind of thing. It's real marble; cost a pot of money; see the gleam there; only marble gleams that way; the sort the toffs have on their tombs, that is.' Can't you see the kind of thing you'll get? And the kind of fathead who'll unveil it, and the kind of tosh he'll say?"

He was enjoying his innings, but wanted to be gone from among them. Mr. Quart gave him a chance to go with a fine curtain. Mr. Quart was a big man with a bullying manner.

"I must say," he said, "Stubbington has shown her sense in turning her back on what's artistic for a good concrete proposal."

"You'll get a concrete Memorial, if you don't watch your contractors," Frampton said.

He went out on this, noting as he went a professional smile on the faces of the building party. He came away, raging at being asked to advise a Committee of this sort, at having gone to it, and at being so treated by it. He felt, that he had been an ass to go to it, and that now the reading-desk would go up in the triangle, and everybody would think that he had advised it.

"Golly, it'll be a terror, that desk," he thought, "and the swine'll print, that the Committee had the benefit of Mr. Mansell's advice. I've made a few more enemies," he said, "but I enjoy making enemies here; I'll make a few more in a day or two."

In this, he spoke truth; he did. That winter was a sad season for him, because it made him feel the emptiness of his life without Margaret. He walked out, to look down over Spirr from the top of the Waste above it. He thought of her with great sadness.

"Still," he thought, "something of your wish lives on still; that is your wood, and the birds there live by your mercy for them. I've stopped the beastly hunter on all this side of the country; and I'll put some of your ideas into practice when I get the new gun being made here."

He walked home feeling frustrated. He had Tim up to the house to dinner that night and plied him with the drinks he loved, so that Tim, going back to his lodge in Spirr, mistook his way, and was found in the outskirts of Stubbington shortly after midnight, singing that:

"The only time that I did wrong
I courted a fair pretty maid."

As he was very rude to the policeman who tried to direct him, he passed the rest of the night in a Stubbington police cell. Frampton had him out of it, soon after breakfast. He was not well pleased with Tim, but knew that it was his own fault.

"You've got no head," he said. "You ought not to drink these things when your head is like that. You've got about as much head for alcohol as my maiden aunt has for lust."

His morning had been spoiled by the expedition to Stubbington; he had found the town already gathering in the market-place for the meet of the fox-hounds, which always took place there on Boxing Day. About two hundred people had gathered there to see the meet when he arrived. Before he left, another hundred had come in; some forty riders had

mustered. He was, by this time, well known to the fox-hunting set; they recognised him, as he drove slowly through the press with Tim. They began by pointing him out as the chap who had closed Spirr and Tittups. One or two of the young men began to boo him. Then one, who was more outspoken than his fellows, rode up to the car and called:

"Yah, ye damn spoil-sport. You ought to be ducked in the damn mill-pond."

"You go threaten the fox," Frampton said, stopping his car and switching off the engine. "That's about all you're fit for. But don't you threaten me, or you'll find yourself in queer street."

"Yah," the man said.

Half a dozen others, thinking that there might be fun, rode up and also called: "Yah": "Who closed Spirr": "Dirty gun-maker": "Son of a Stanchester pie-man": "Hot pies": "Nice puppy pies; nice as Mother makes 'em."

It was quite good-humoured, and a great delight to the crowd. A policeman shoved through the throng and reproved Frampton for stopping in the crowded street.

"What are you blocking the road for?" he said. "Can't you see you've all these cars behind you, wanting to get by? Move on. You ought to know better than to stop like that."

Frampton said nothing, but set the car going. The riders laughed and booed; the crowd gave derisive cheers.

Frampton drove out of Stubbington pretty fast. When he reached the outskirts, he accelerated. He met a good many riders on very fresh horses coming in to the meet. Some of these lifted their hands for him to slow as he passed. He did not slow for any of them; he whirled past, and enjoyed the image in his mirror of the horses careering across the road, with the riders clinging to their necks. About a couple of miles

from Stubbington, he met the hounds, and gave them the same measure. He rejoiced exceedingly to hear the oaths of the hunt servants as he passed them.

"Damn you," he muttered. "Get off the roads into the fields if you want to come hunting in this twentieth century."

A mile farther on, he passed the blood-red car, in which, as he knew, the Tilter fellow went to the meets. He saw the Tilter and his wife, and spat towards them, but the gesture was lost upon them.

Before lunch that day, he walked up to his new purchase on the Waste, for a quiet hour with the trial piece sent to him from the Works. This was a light, sporting model of his new gun, No. 123, with some clips of his new explosive, Mansellite, in practice charges. The gun took clips of a hundred charges, and even when loaded weighed less than three pounds. He had tried it at the Works, and had had no doubt that it was a marvellous weapon. He walked up to the Waste with it, to a gulley with high ground at its end, which he had long noted as a trial range. Against this high ground, he fixed his target-cards; he then passed a happy hour shooting and making notes. He judged that the gun needed two or three adjustments, which would add to its weight, but that even without these it was the best weapon in the world.

"This time I've got it," he said to himself; "not its semblance, but itself. This'll do the trick. Here go ten pounds off the load the P.B.I. will have to carry in the next war. Still, I suppose," he added, "the hardy Annuals will make them carry their tombstones instead, to maintain that spirit of subservience, without which no hardy Annual can misdirect a war."

He was always careful to keep one cartridge undischarged before turning home. He did so now. He had often found

some tempting target on his way home, some fine coloured leaf or tree-boss.

"One shot on my way home," he said, "then lunch."

He saw nothing to shoot at, but strolled along, thinking of things which might be done to improve the weapon. The morning had given him a new interest in his work.

"This will be the gun of the future," he said. "There can be no doubt of that."

He was walking home thus, late for lunch but very happy, by way of the lake-head, when he heard the cry of hounds away to the south-east. Three or four cries came as though hounds were on to something but doubtful of it; he heard a distant horn and, in the stillness, a huntsman's cheer.

"There the swine are," he growled, "checked on the clay there. Get down and smell for yourselves, why don't you, instead of leaving it to the nobler beasts?"

However, they neither heard nor obeyed; the horn and the cheering continued; then presently hounds spoke to something, were cheered to it, and seemed to make it good. They had hit off the line; they broke into cry, and were in an instant away down-hill.

"They'll not get into this estate again," Frampton said; but remembered, as he spoke, that the fencing along his southern and south-eastern borders had not been made, as he called it, "skunk-proof."

He was at that moment near the end of the lake where Margaret had first caught sight of it. He was looking towards the open southern side of the valley. As he looked, he saw hounds coming over the brow of the slope; they were coming fast, with little whimpers, with their heads up and their sterns straight. The huntsman appeared, rather on their right, watching them intently. Almost at that instant, Frampton saw their

fox coming straight towards him. He had been a fine, big fellow, that morning, when pushed from his covert, but he had gone eight miles since then, and was done for now. He was dragged, plastered with mud, so wet that he seemed all skin and bone, with his back hunched up in the middle, and his filthy brush trailing. Some memory of the lake may have been in his reeling brain. He may have had a wild duck there, perhaps, and remembered reeds which might shelter him; but he was tottering on his feet, his tongue was out like a wet flag, not like a lancer's pennon. He might get to the reeds and sink there, but wherever he sank he would never get up again. The hounds were romping down the valley a hundred yards away. Frampton said to himself:

"The swine will kill him here. Well, they shan't do that."

He did not stop to think of consequences. Just as the huntsman urged his hunter up the bank on to Frampton's land, Frampton shot the fox dead, with his last cartridge, rushed to it, and flung the corpse far out into the lake. The leading hounds ran to the lake margin after it, and there threw up.

"Take your damned dogs out of this," he called to the huntsman. "Call your damned dogs out of it." The hounds were round him. The huntsman was swearing at him and at the hounds. From all the valley-side, horsemen and horsewomen and children on ponies appeared. Annual-Tilter was there. "Get off this estate," Frampton said. "I've shot your fox. Clear out of it and get another. Get to hell out of it, the lot of you."

A big man, with a tough face, called:

"Horsewhip the swine. Let's duck the mucker. Come on, you, let's duck him."

"No threats," Frampton said. "Any man who touches me'll die."

"What d'you mean by shooting our fox?" the Annual-Tilter called. "What d'you mean, sir?"

"What do I mean, you bun-headed ape?" Frampton said. "The poor thing was run off his legs and on my land, and therefore mine to do what I choose with. I shot him out of mercy. I'm only sorry someone can't do as much by you."

There were thirty riders, all hot, blowsy, fuming, angry and raging. Each one of the thirty behaved like one of a pack; even the children called in shrill voices that he was a swine and a spoil-sport; the women were not backward; the men cursed him. One of the women, with a very clear, hard, penetrating voice, the one who had spoken at the Meeting, called:

"Do you fellows call yourselves men, that you can't horse-whip him within an inch of his life?"

"No, madam," Frampton called to her, "they don't call themselves men. They know that I've got a gun, and am pretty good at using it. They are only fox-hunters. But, Golly, they can chase a fox to death, if all his earths are stopped."

Bynd appeared at this instant; he had not seen and did not know what had happened; he had had a fall and was covered with mud, but in some swift, human way, native to him, he judged the situation.

"Come, come," he said, "you know we mustn't hunt this line. Come on, Master; come on, Bill. Get going. Never mind what has happened; we're not wanted here and have no business here. Take hounds out of it, Bill."

Bill swore under his breath: "We don't want any Christian religion with a fox-shooter," but he trailed his thong and called the hounds, who followed. He led them at a fast trot towards Weston Mullples, and the riders, with a few choice remarks to Frampton, went after them. Frampton followed them to the gap, with a few choice retorts. He had enjoyed the scene

enormously. He had faced the lot and cowed the lot, and all with an empty gun, which had lain at the ready. He had publicly called Annual-Tilter "a bun-headed ape," which exactly described him; he had put a poor fox out of his misery, and had won all along the line.

Going home late for lunch, he saw that the news of the scene had come somehow before him. Mrs. Haulover and the maids were looking at him very curiously. Well, let them look, he thought.

"Look, first, at this gun," he said. "You can bear witness, that all the cartridges in this clip have been fired."

During that afternoon, the tale of the shooting of the fox went up and down the land; it roused a pretty storm in all that part of Tatshire; nothing else was talked of. The gun-fella at *Mullples*, whose father had sold cats'-meat-pies in Stanchester, had held up the entire Hunt with a gun, had threatened them all with death, had shot at the Master, and had killed the fox.

Frampton knew that the case would reach the police; he, therefore, drove in to Stubbington Police Station that afternoon, taking his uncleaned gun and the salved corpse of the fox. He made an exact statement of the occurrence, and was able to prove, by one of his workmen, who had been ditching within earshot, that only one shot had been fired and no threat made. Having thus cleared the ground, he waited for the next move. No move came from the other side. He knew that he was loathed by every sportsman in the district; but he took pleasure in that. He liked being loathed; it showed him that he had made them squirm. He had certainly done that.

Some of the charitable said that he was a clever man, perhaps, but quite deranged, because he hadn't been raised to the peerage. The less charitable said that he was simply a bounder,

who behaved like the pie-seller he was. The few, who had read the science gossip in their weekly paper, said that he had an inferiority complex, "which, of course, would make him behave like that." One knew for a fact that he was sickening for G.P.I. The main body of people said, "The chap's a bounder," and wished that one of his beastly guns would go off by accident and blast him into eternity.

He let it be known now that he was going to stablsh some of his plant on the Waste. Rolly's drawings had been shown and applauded. The members of the Hunt wailed and swore that this damned crank and madman was going to ruin the whole countryside. However, he knew by this time that they were not a very efficient body. Long before their agitation had got beyond savage scowls at railway stations, and words flung at him in the market-place, he had something of the settlement in the course of building; but the building was precluded by such a fencing of the property, that the Hunt was barred from one great area over which it had roved at will for six generations of sportsmen.

Late one night, at the winter's end, just as he reached his bedroom, the telephone rang. He heard the voice of Miss Pilbrow, his excellent, steely, glittering secretary in London, with her carefully-picked, deliberate speech, which he had never known ruffled.

"Yes," he said, "is that you, Miss Pilbrow? What is it?"

"It's about King Faringdon, the sculptor. He's just been here, asking to see you."

"Rather late at night to visit a spinster," he said. "What does he want?"

"He's in great distress. His bronzes have been turned down."

"What? The two he was doing for Snipton Town Hall?"

"Yes."

"Turned down? What d'ye mean? That the Town Council won't have them?"

"Yes. They refuse them. They say they aren't the things they expected, and they want something more cheerful."

"I say, say that again."

"They want something more cheerful."

Frampton put down the receiver, so that he might swear away from the lady's delicate, but by now accustomed ear.

"And Faringdon't off his head?" he said.

"Well: yes. He's nearly frantic, really. He came to you to ask if you could buy the drawings or something. He's been counting on the payment for the bronzes and is absolutely broke, he says, without it."

Frampton knew pretty well what kind of mood Faringdon would be in, and the state of his finances.

"Are you in touch with him?" he asked. "Is he there still?"

"No, he's gone now. I've been trying at intervals to get you for the last two hours. He's gone to his studio, or at least he said he was going."

"Damn," Frampton said. Then he called to Miss Pilbrow: "Is Joe up, or has he gone to bed?"

"Gone to bed."

"Tell Joe to get up, and go round to Faringdon's studio at once. He can get a taxi. Give him some money. But he's to go at once, the sooner the quicker, *pronto* and *muy muy pronto*. Take a letter from me; 'Dear King, I'm sorry Snipton is so mad, but one man's folly may be a wise man's gain. May I have the refusal of your Bronzes? I'm sorry I was out when you called. Miss Pilbrow will arrange matters with you.' Tell Joe to take that and to wait at King's studio till he's given the letter into King's hand and seen him read it. If King isn't at the studio, and anyone can tell him where King is, he'd

better go on to that place in the taxi. Get Joe off at once."

Miss Pilbrow got Joe off at once. Frampton remained at his lamp, reading ghost stories, for another hour, when Miss Pilbrow rang up again, to say that Joe had found King Faringdon at Julian's, and that he sent his best thanks.

"Glad you got me at last," Frampton said, "and I'm glad Joe got him. I'll see King in a day or two, tell him. Good night."

As he turned over in bed, at about four the next morning, it occurred to him that the two bronze figures, the Female Grievs, as Faringdon called them, would be the very things for the ends of the parapets of Stubbington Bridge. Why not offer them to Stubbington? They had been designed, at an enlightened man's suggestion, for the Snipton Town Hall. The enlightened man had been turned out of office, and his plans killed. They were not cheerful things. One represented bereaved wifehood, the other bereaved virginity. These two heroic figures, the Andromache and Polyxena of the Great War, would move men for generations to come. To be sure, there might be better sites for them than Stubbington bridge, but none so near his home, and none, in London, so beautiful. Half asleep as he was, he muttered:

"I'll get at the clerk of the Council here to-morrow, and make the offer. It'll probably make me a few more enemies, but the bridge-end will be a fine place for the two figures, and Faringdon ought to be pleased."

He went into Stubbington to see the Clerk of the Town Council about the Bronzes. The clerk was an active and pleasant man, a good golfer and amateur actor, but not very sure what Bronzes might be. He gave Frampton the impression of believing them to be basins. However, the course of action was plain: if Frampton would write a brief description of the ("what was it you said the things were to be?"), and

make a formal offer to the Council, why, then, it would go before the Council on Monday, and he would most probably be asked to come to see them on the following Monday.

As he foretold, so it was; Frampton was bidden to the Council.

He was there in good time, and hung about in a passage under the curious eye of a charwoman who was mopping down the stairs, after the passing of the boots of the Council. Presently the Clerk came out and asked him to come into the meeting-room. It was a big, well-lit room, with a bright fire burning. There was a long table covered with green baize; at this the Council sat; some whom he knew, and three strangers. On the walls were paintings of deceased royalties. George the Fourth was the most recent. The Charles the Second might be by Lely, Frampton thought. The town of Stubbington had sheltered Charles on his flight to the sea; this may well have been a royal gift.

The Chairman of the Council was one nicknamed "Old Bert Fist"; he was not known to Mansell, save by repute; tales of him had been told to him during the week. He was a slow, beery, popular and very kindly man, who ran the big general store called the "Stubbington Stump."

Mr. Fist said: "Well, good morning to ye, Mr. Mansold; come in and sit down and make your miserable self happy."

He motioned him to a chair, and then with a wave of the hand introduced him to the Council. As Frampton sat, old Bert fumbled for a paper, which his neighbour found for him.

"I believe, Mr. Mansold, you want to do something with statues, or as some call them, bronzes, at about the bridge-end?"

"Yes," Frampton said that he did.

"Well, Mr. Mansold," Old Fist said, "will you be so kind as

to tell the Council just what it is you want to do with statues there, and what these statues are, and how many clothes they got?"

Frampton told the Council; but he did not tell them his inmost thoughts, nor did he mention Snipton. The Council seemed puzzled and suspicious and a little indignant; puzzled because they could not see what little game this fellow might be up to; suspicious because they did not like this sort of thing, statues and that; one never knew where it would stop; and indignant because Stubbington could put up her own statues, without any outside interference from one who had only just come and had already put everybody's backs up. Old Bert Fist pondered on what Frampton had said.

"You'll excuse my asking, Mr. Mansold," he said, "but I don't know much about statues, never having had one done to me; I leave that to this grateful Council when I go to a Higher Chamber; but I understand that if you go making statues you spend a deal of money; it's not so much the worth of the marble in the thing itself, it's the worth of the marble that has to be cut away first. What I'm getting at is, that we're responsible to the rate-payers for every penny; and we've got no money for statues."

"But I wish to make it clear," Frampton said, "that the figures I have in mind will be bronze, not marble, and that I wish to give them, if you will accept them, without asking for a penny from your rate-payers."

One of the Council members said that the bridge-end had been mentioned as the place for the statues, and he would, therefore, suggest a more central site, such as the Diamond Park, as they called it. Mr. Fist pondered.

"But you will understand, Mr. Mansold," he said at last, "that we're responsible to the rate-payers for all that's done,

as well as all that's spent. And when it comes to statues, why, they're very ticklish cattle, some of 'em. Not but what we're grateful for your kind thought, I'm sure."

"I understand," Frampton said, "that you will want to see designs showing what the figures will look like, when in place, before you grant the site for them. I've got the designs for you. And as for the central site" (here he turned to the member who had just spoken), "I want to make it clear that I only offer the figures for the end of the bridge; I mean the ends, north and south, of the parapets of the eastern end of the bridge. That is the site where they would look best and be best seen by everybody coming to the city from that side."

"You mean where we splayed the bridge out a bit, in the widening?" Mr. Fist said. "We was thinking of putting a couple of lamp-posts there, if you remember, last time poor old Joe was here." He said this to a member, who remembered well. "Poor old Joe, he couldn't abide the thought of lamp-posts and taking the gas across the bridge," Mr. Fist said. "But that's the place, Mr. Mansold, across at Hen's Marsh. I don't know what poor old Joe would 'a said to statues."

Another member said that he would like to know what the figures would look like to people coming across the bridge from the town; would people going out of town have anything to look at?

Frampton said: "Their backs would be towards the town. People coming from the town would not see them, save as the backs of big people. But backs can look very attractive; many men will follow a back a long way, in the hope of presently seeing the face."

There was a laugh at this. A man said:

"Aren't they jolly well had, nine times out of ten."

The member who had asked the question said that he didn't quite see why the figures should be there. Why shouldn't they be at the town end of the bridge, facing the town?

Frampton said that at the town end, the swerve of the road made the bridge-end a bad place for statues.

"Yes," the member persisted, "but so's the other place a bad place, it seems to me."

"Not at all," Frampton said. "It is a fair field of view. You will see the figures all the straight two hundred yards leading to the bridge-end from the country. When you come to them there's a fair space by the road, where you can leave your car while you examine them. They will add to the appearance of the bridge. At the town end, anyone looking at the statue'll get run over."

"Still, the people of the town would see them," the man objected, "and in the middle of Hen's Marsh they wouldn't. People don't go out the Hen's Marsh side."

"No, they come in from there," Frampton said.

"Then you don't want the town's people to see them, only the country people?"

"I want everybody to see them who wants to see them," he answered. "I believe that a good many people will go out to see them. And I know that they'll improve the look of the bridge."

"We in Stubbington are very proud of our bridge," Mr. Fist said. "It was a bridge site in Roman times."

A member who had not spoken now asked if he might be permitted to ask, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, exactly why Mr. Mansell was wishing to put up the statues. No one had done such a thing before, and the question was bound to be asked sooner or later, in the Press and that. Mr. Fist said that if it wasn't a rude question, he, too, would like

to know. Perhaps Mr. Mansold would not mind telling them.

"I'll tell you, certainly," Frampton said. "I own these two bronze figures, which I admire enormously. I think that they ought to be public property and would be very noble figures for such a site as your bridge-end. I would like to give them to Stubbington, for that site, if you will accept them for it. It is a site unequalled in England. I believe that with them the bridge-end will be a thing unmatched in England. Then for other motives, I have come to live not far from here. I do some of my shopping here. You might call this my market town. I have given here, as yet, no gift to any public body, save as subscription or donation. I would like to give something more important and more personal out of my love for art. I believe that if I give Stubbington two bronzes by Faringdon, the future inhabitants of the place will think of me without dislike."

"Well, Mr. Mansold," Mr. Fist said, "you have made us an offer, whether of statues or of bronzes, and which is which I'm not sure, and as the Chairman, it falls to me to say we're very much obliged, I'm sure, and we shall be very pleased to discuss the matter and let you know. If you may think we're not very welcoming, it's because we haven't had much experience of statues, or bronze statues, or bronzes. We've only got two things in Stubbington, which we pride ourselves on: good hearts and common sense."

"A first-rate foundation," Frampton said. "You can get most things with those."

"I don't know about most things," Mr. Fist said, "but some we can."

Frampton had taken this as his dismissal, and was going, when a member said:

"I wonder if, before he goes, Mr. Mansell will tell us one

thing? In fixing statues you have to do quite a bit of masonry sometimes, fixing them in and tidying up round after. May I ask if Mr. Mansell means us to do that—provided, of course, that his scheme goes through?”

Frampton said that he meant the statues to be a gift, and that the gift would include the putting them in position and tidying up afterwards. The passage to the bridge would not be interfered with. Traffic would be able to pass, even when the bronzes were being put into position. But he wished it to be clear, that the citizens or townspeople of Stubbington would not have to pay a penny for the making or fixing of the bronzes. After the bronzes were there, they would be town property, and as much liabilities to the town as the rest of the bridge at the end of which they would stand. He made this, as he thought, clear to them, and then left. He felt that he had been accused of trying to poison Stubbington in its sleep, and was now suspected of having set the town on fire. He had tried to make them a handsome gift. They had made it clear that they were up to his devilry, thank you, and weren't going to let him get away with it.

Just before he left, he placed on the table his photographs of the two figures, and the sketches of them in position, so that they might consider and discuss them after he had gone.

When he left the Council, he went over to see the warden in Spirr. He had been very bitter towards Tim since the Christmas frolic; but had been thinking that he was responsible for the frolic, and for Tim's feeling lonely.

“What else can he do here?” he thought. “The place would drive me to drink the first night.”

He found Tim unshaven and dirty, at work on nesting-boxes for the spring season. His pets, the tame goose and partridge, came forward to meet the visitor, with the comment

of their kind. Afterwards, the goose returned to watch Tim at his work.

"Look here," Frampton said, "I've been wanting to speak to you. This goose and partridge may be better company than most of the people round here; I don't say they're not; but they aren't enough for you. You feel it yourself, and that's why you're in the pubs half your time. What I want you to do this spring is to get the Boy Scouts keen about this. There's a very good chap in charge of them at Tatchester. I want some of the best of the boys to come out here, and help put up the boxes, and help you in the nesting season, watching and filling in the notes. There's nothing the keen boy would love more. It would do you good to have the boys around; and you've got a lot of talents that would do the boys good. Only this pub business has got to stop, understand? It's doing your talent no good."

Tim had heard more than once that the pub business was doing his talent no good. He brightened at the thought of the boys, and said that he would be glad to have them, if they were at all keen. From this, he went on to show that he was himself keen. He had had the luck to see and draw some fire-crests during the day before. He spoke of them as a divine might talk of little angels. Frampton left him, thinking that the chances were, that Tim had ceased to grow at the age of fourteen or so. Something had stopped him, then, and had kept his mind that of a boy.

"Possibly, the Scouts'll buck him up," Frampton thought, "and he may buck them up; he's a boy himself in most ways."

He had never liked Tim, yet as he came away from the dirty hut, where the goose was talking, he thought of a look of Tim's, which recalled Margaret to him.

"O God," he cried again, "I wish you'd killed me instead of Margaret. He's like her, when he looks up suddenly. I'm really responsible to Margaret for him, and I hope the boys will do the trick. If I sack him, he'll be on the Embankment in a month and in the Morgue within the year."

However, the suggestion of the Scouts came from the source of all good suggestions. Some of them came over on that Saturday afternoon. Tim had prepared for their coming and gave them a wonderful time. He was not only a boy himself, he was an inspired boy. Thenceforward they were frequent visitors to Spirr.

Meanwhile, the Council in Stubbington debated the matter of the bronzes. They did not like the look of the photographs, but then they were somewhat staggered by Frampton's declaration that Faringdon was a genius. Mr. Harold supported this, when asked, by saying that sooner or later the world would recognise Faringdon as a genius, and then the statues would be worth their weight in gold. It would be very nice to find people coming from all over the world to look at the end of their bridge.

They went out to look at the end of the bridge. Now that you came to think of it, it did look a little bare. It was a pity they hadn't brought the gas across in Old Joe's time. If there had been lamp-posts at the bridge-end, why, all this talk of statues would never have arisen.

But it wasn't going to cost the town a penny; that they had had repeated, as well as in Mr. Mansell's hand. If the things were not to cost a penny anyhow, ever, and might (as they were assured), become worth their weight in gold, almost overnight, why, then, would they not be failing in their duty to the rate-payers if they turned the scheme down?

This was the problem which perplexed them. But, then,

the photographs did look very queer. Well, that was the art coming out, the queerness. You got used to that, the papers said. Then, if these statues were so very precious, why did this Mr. Mansell, who was a queer fish, anyway, always putting people's backs up, why did he want to get rid of them, especially for a place like the bridge-end. This, too, was a problem which perplexed them. The other end of the bridge would have been all right; but not that end, where no one of the town would see them, unless they walked out on Sunday.

They debated and debated. They felt sure that there must be a snag, but could not see where, nor what. Time went by, yet they could not make up their minds. Frampton said nothing about the rejection of the figures from Snipton. They knew nothing about that. Presently, as he grew weary of waiting for a reply from them, he wrote to tell them that if they did not want the bronzes, he would be glad to know, so that he might offer them to the Tate. This made it necessary for them to make up their minds.

They wrote to say that they would like, if it were possible, to see the statues "before coming to a final decision." This was a most reasonable request. Frampton would have been pleased, if they had shown a wish to see them early in the proceedings. Still, better late than never. He had the things in his big bare room downstairs. He wrote to say that he would be delighted. Old Bert Fist and four others, making a Committee of the fine arts, would come to lunch to see them and settle the matter.

They came to lunch, which was certainly well worth coming for. Old Bert and the others were jovial company at lunch; they cast wondering eyes at Frampton's frescoes, but did not let them interfere with enjoyment. At the end of the lunch, Mr. Fist made a merry speech and drank Frampton's health.

Presently, they moved out to see the bronzes, saw them, and were soon tempted back to try some more of Frampton's brandy.

They wondered a little, that the bronzes were not of St. George killing a dragon, nor of a Tatshire man in uniform, with a handkerchief tied round his brow, standing at bay. Still, these things were art, and you never could tell with art what was art. One member said that they would look very well at the bridge-ends when the leaves were out on the trees, so as to take the eyes away. That was the feeling of most of them, that the leaves would set them off and take people's eyes away. Anyhow, it was most kind of Mr. Mansell, or Mr. Mansold, as old Fist always called him, it was most kind of Mr. Mansold to offer such valuable things to the town. They would remember the lunch and meeting with Mr. Mansold and Mr. Mansold's brandy; it had been a red-letter day to all of them. As to the bronzes, they would send a formal letter of grateful acceptance as soon as they got back to the office.

Frampton suggested that they should all have a little more brandy to clinch the bargain, and at the end of the brandy hoped that old Mr. Bert would sing them one of his songs. Old Mr. Bert gladly sang; then they had a little more brandy. Then they were all the best of good friends; happy that Stubbington had so good a friend so near, proud that the old bridge was to have so fine an addition to its beauties, and resolved that if there was one thing that Stubbington needed, it was a little more art, and now Mr. Frampton was going to give it. When should he give it? Well, when the leaves were out, when it was warm in the sun and people wouldn't mind standing about. The middle of May would be a good time. They could get somebody down to speak. The Lord-Lieutenant might be unable, but the Bishop would come; and, of course, the Member;

a detachment of the Tatshires would come and a good band. Would Mr. Frampton unveil the figures?

Frampton said: "No, I want the figures to be unveiled, the one by a mother who lost a son, the other by a woman who lost her lover in the War. You have plenty of both in Stubbington. I feel those are the people to do the unveiling."

There was a hush after this; the party went away. The letter of acceptance was sent that night and was received by Frampton the next morning.

It chanced that a few days later, Faringdon came down to see the site. He was much pleased with it; he had liked the old bridge, which had been built in days when the Hen Marsh stretched beyond the little river. He liked the amendment which Stubbington had made of it. As Frampton and he were walking back from the site, they turned from the bridge to a little space on the river-bank, where people could hire canoes and punts.

"This is a pretty little patch, with the pub there," Faringdon said.

"It is, isn't it?" Frampton said. "And it's famous in Stubbington history. You ought to do a bronze of King Stubba, to go there."

"Who was King Stubba?" Faringdon asked.

"Who was King Arthur?" Frampton answered. "I don't swear that he existed, but Stubba is the local hero, who gave his name to the town, Stubba's town. He is said to have driven out the enemy here. The enemy were in the town, sacking it, and had set fire to the bridge. Stubba galloped up to save the town, rode over the burning bridge, which collapsed just as he got across, and so had to fight the whole lot of them single-handed until his men could swim or ford across to help him. It would be a fine theme for you, Stubba on a war-horse, just

at this point, and a plinth with a relief all round it, of the fight just here. It won't all have happened, but something of it happened, and at this very place."

Faringdon looked at the place with a kindling eye.

"I wish he'd a prettier name," he said. "It would be a pretty good place to put something."

"Well, what d'ye think about it?"

"I think yes about it, if you mean it and these chaps would give the site."

"I'll see them about it."

Faringdon had an impassive face, but expressive eyes; his face moved no muscle but his eyes gleamed. He walked about the space, seeing it all round. It wasn't a market-place nor a Cathedral close, but it was a good space and no doubt busy with people all day long. After doing those two contemplatives, Andromache and Polyxena; and the third, the Hecuba, which Frampton had commissioned, it would be fun to try a piece of vivid action, as well as the narrative on the plinth. Frampton saw that he had touched him to a big work. They drove home to lunch. After lunch, while Faringdon sketched designs for Stubba, Frampton went to see Old Fist and plied him with incitement to have King Stubba on the scene of Stubba's fight. Old Fist liked the idea.

He had not been nicknamed "Old Fist" for nothing. Once in the far past, Old Fist when he was Young Fist had stood up to John L. on a music-hall stage and had lasted for three rounds with him. John L. had called him the best amateur he'd ever met, and had said he was proud to shake his hand. Old Fist took to the idea of King Stubba.

"Why, yes, Mr. Mansold," he said, "that would be something we understand."

However, the Council was less swayed by sudden feeling.

They pointed out to Old Fist that the citizens hadn't yet had a chance of judging the other two statues. They didn't want a third, till they knew how the other two had gone down. Old Fist said that there was something in that, but in this case, though he didn't know anything about art, he did know what he liked. Perhaps, somewhere in his innocent heart was a feeling that he was like Old Stubba. Anyhow, he made the Council offer the site, for a statue, or a bronze, or a bronze statue.

The lady whom Frampton called the angry ham was the secretary of a local branch of the County Charity. The Charity, being largely dependent upon subscriptions, was often short of money. When this happened, efforts were made to make money for it, by holding bazaars, jumble-sales, and sales of work, or by giving concerts or entertainments. These took place usually in or near Stubbington. Soon after Frampton had offered a King Stubba to the Council, it chanced that the angry ham was compelled to organise a concert in aid of the Charity; funds had never before been so low. Concerts were difficult to organise, and of late years there had been so much competition, in the way of cinemas, the wireless, and the gramophone, that they had been less popular and had brought in less money. However, the need of the Charity was pressing; ruin stared it in the face, so to speak; she, therefore, organised her Committee, and announced a concert in the Stokeley-Pitte Institute at Subbington.

Though she had cut Frampton in the street, she considered that in so holy a cause as charity that might be wiped out for the moment. He was the richest man in the district and might be persuaded to give generously, might even, with one cheque, flung, as these fellows do fling cheques, as entrance money to society, make the concert a success without further trouble to her. It is possible, that she believed, that Frampton was

longing to buy his way to social recognition in this way. Judgment was not strong in her. She wrote to Frampton, enclosing a leaflet, and saying that they all so much hoped that he would buy some tickets and head the list of subscribers. She was sure that so good a cause would appeal to him. Of course, she added, she knew how busy he was, but she hoped that even if he could not come himself he would still buy tickets and subscribe.

Frampton wondered a little at her cheek, for he remembered her cut and had meant to avenge it presently. Here was a weapon for him, a sword that would cut the ham both as patron of the poor and of the arts. He would go to the concert and get young Harold to let him write about it in the *Gazette*. Young Harold was going in a few days to a real big chance in Liverpool; he would not mind what was said. He went to ask Dick about this, to make sure; Dick said that he was willing, as long as Frampton avoided libel.

"I won't libel 'em," Frampton said. "Fair critical comment is what they'll get from me."

"Very well, then," Dick said, "you shall do it for us."

"I won't promise to write you a set criticism," Frampton said, "only give you the thoughts that arise in me, if any do."

He did not reply to the angry ham's letter, but caused five tickets to be bought.

"I will sit among empty chairs," he thought, "and have two empties on each side of me, one for my coat and hat, one to keep the bore off, and one on each side, to remove the cigarette-smoker and the chocolate-muncher a little farther. But why the devil does this ham woman not give the money herself? She draws most of her money from this County, in rents. Let her pay some of it back as conscience money, and for the rest, go round and beg from door to door, and plead her cause herself,

instead of getting up a vile entertainment of this sort, with all sorts of extra expenses, of advertisements, printings, hire of hall, lighting, heating, to soak away any profits. She will provide something atrocious in the way of song and music, and the badness of it all will be excused by the plea, that it is all for charity; and in the end, when she has made night hideous and life loathsome for two and a half hours, she'll have nineteen-and-sixpence to give to the Fund."

He had long known the sort of concert given in the country. Alas, he had long known the type of amusement offered to the people everywhere. Still, he went to this one, sat through all of it, slept upon his first impressions, waited for the announcement of the takings, and then wrote as follows:

"The art powers of a race," he wrote, "do not decline; they are there. In some ages, they are encouraged, with good models and good incentives; in others, they are neglected or thwarted, with no incentive and with base models.

"What has happened in the English countryside? It must once have had an art encouragement and good models; the survivals prove it. Most villages had also some art of festival of dance, play or song; the survivals prove that. Where is the art now? Here and there an old man may still put a straw crown on the top of a rick, but who could carve a gargoyle for his church or be trusted to paint a decoration there? As for the festivals, I have lately been to one.

"Perhaps, it would be fair to explain that the idea of a festival, as something quite apart from the idea of making money, is dead among us. This festival was the attempt of a community to make money for a local charity. A charity in this country is usually made necessary by the stupidity of ruling classes, who at times call on the stupidity of all other

classes to keep it, and thereby them, from a deserved death. So here.

"The festival was called a concert, a word defined in the Oxford Dictionary as 'a musical performance (usually of a series of separate pieces) in which a number of singers or players or both, take part.' It took place, as such things usually do, in a building plainly designed as a morgue and then thwarted of its natural prey of suicides. In this disappointed morgue, designed for four hundred, a hundred and twenty people gathered to support charity for two hours upon old wooden chairs. It was a cold night, the building was not warmed, so far as one could perceive; it was as cold as charity. The total receipts, we heard, were just under twelve pounds. The expenses, with hire of hall, lighting, advertisements, leaflets, printing, secretary and accompanist came to nine pounds, eighteen shillings and fourpence. The charity is up by fourpence a head.

"I do not grudge the charity its two pounds; but I ask, what has happened to the English countryside, that a performance such as I endured can be offered as entertainment?

"I saw at that concert the results of a century and a half of landlordism and commercialism; both of which have driven the salt and marrow of the land out of the country or into the towns. I saw the art-starved soul in all its native hideousness. One man, indeed, tried to play some Chopin *Etudes*, but upon an Institute piano, which, as I have proved, has four dead notes and some loose wires in it. The organisers had not even taken the trouble to send a tuner. These attempts at Chopin were not only the only ambitious things in the programme, they were the only musical things.

"Now, we are by nature a musical and music-loving

people. Our past proves that. We have welcomed musicians and composers for centuries; Beethoven blessed us; Handel, Haydn, Chopin all found welcome and shelter here. Yet in a fair-sized town like Stubbington a popular concert, given for a popular cause, contained not one other item which could be described as music. Imbecile song was followed by imbecile noise, made now upon a trombone, then upon what is called a 'boys-get-bizziphone,' of which the best that could be said, is that at times it was less loud than at others.

"I am not a Bolshevik in any way, but the arts are the fruits of a way of life; and in this concert I was offered the fruits of our present way of life, and have no hesitation in saying that any change would be for the good."

He read this through.

"That'll make 'em squirm," he said.

He thought a little, and then added:

"I am not a revolutionary in any way, but if this be the entertainment of the New Jerusalem which we were promised when the War ended, then I vote that we try for a newer Jerusalem, by any means. If these be the results, as may be argued, of five generations of blood-sports, which begin now with snobbery and end in death, let us abolish fox-hunting. If this be the result of the schools, let us reform them root and branch. But probably these are some of the results of darkness in a ruling class, forgetful of its obligations."

"That *will* make 'em squirm," he said, with glee. It did.

There are many things better than making people squirm; nearly all these things can be practised easily, without any

subsequent reapings of storms. But the angry ham had cut Frampton in the street, and here was his chance to make her a little thoughtful another time. The letter went to the *Gazette*. Young Harold was away when it came in, but his acting chief had it set up, and the proofs sent to *Mullples* by special messenger. The letter was in the paper that night, and in the hands of all the performers at the concert by noon the next day. It gave most of them acute pain and roused their deepest fury. It did not reach the angry ham till late that night, as she had gone to London for a day's shopping, "and to have her face done."

When it did reach her, she raged exceedingly, but not more bitterly than the other victims. In her rage, she was not less lovely than at other times, but less coherent. Frampton's last page kept her awake for most of the night. In the morning, she was able to consult Sir Peter. He was at all times gentle towards the point of view opposed to his own. He read the letter, and said that he thought it an ill-advised, intemperate, and, therefore, unjust letter, but that it represented a point of view. As to the charges brought, it was wiser to look upon them as a reaction. The concert had made, as it were, a statement and had provoked a reply. It was the rebound of the ball, which had been flung down. He felt that his wife should not give the letter an undeserved importance by replying to it. Any intemperate letter destroyed itself; this one would be forgotten in a week, or less, if left to itself, without answer. As to the man, he was a clever fellow, unused to country ways; he was a terrible fellow, no doubt, and in some ways an anti-social fellow, but there he was, just at their doors, and the best thing to do about it was to ask him to lunch, and to see if they could not get him to organise something in the village, a gymnasium for the lads, or a choral society.

"We've got to live with him, whether we like it or not," he said. "I'm sure that that's the way to handle him. Get him busy."

In this, as in so many things, Sir Peter was wise; but wisdom is lost upon the angry. Was she, Laetitia, to ask a Bolshevik to lunch? Was she, who had been told that she began with snobbery and ended with death, to be told to live with the teller? Was she to be told in her own county that her concert had revealed the art-starved soul in all its native hideousness? She was not going to turn the other cheek and sit down tamely under such insolence. She was outraged and horrified and wanted to hurt.

She thought of the possible assassins who might do the deed. Pob was useless; he was only a foolish boy who might get into serious trouble; Pink was in the House, and might find it difficult to act; Ponk in Tatchester might be induced to do something. Oh, if only Ponk had owned the paper; she would have had the Editor flung out on to the streets that evening.

Still, something she could do; she could write to that odious Mr. Harold; she could write to the paper itself; she could cause the withdrawal of some of its advertisements, and make it sorry it ever outraged a county magnate. She sat down at her desk and got busy.

Lady Bynd expresses her surprise that Mr. Harold should have printed Mr. Mansell's letter in the current issue of the "Stubbington Gazette." She asks that he will refrain from giving himself the trouble of calling on Sunday afternoon next, as previously arranged.

That cleared the air a little. Then she wrote to the paper:

To the Editor,

The "Stubbington Gazette."

Sir,

As one who has read with horror and indignation your correspondent's ill-informed and worse-natured letter about the recent concert in aid of the County Charity, I wish to point out that the concert was an amateur effort made possible by the kindness and devotion of dwellers in the district who gave their services to a most deserving cause. I fail to see how abuse of men and ladies who have done and given of their best can alter the fact that they at least gave of their best and helped the cause according to their power. Perhaps a stranger to the district, who has in more ways than one helped to bring unrest and disorder here, may henceforth make himself more of a stranger. If he dislikes us, let him consider that the feeling may be returned, with perhaps better grounds, by those responsible for the concert in question.

This helped a little further.

The withdrawal of advertisements was a more ticklish business, but she was not one to shrink. One of the big grocers in Stubbington High used to advertise in the *Gazette*. His daughter had sung in a duet about a cat and a mouse, which Frampton had judged to be the worst song of the evening. Laetitia put on her fur coat and had herself driven to the grocer's.

There had been a time, not long past, when a word from Lady Bynd would have made a Stubbington tradesman consider his policy; the time had passed, but she did not yet admit the fact. The grocer had not seen the letter; he read it, at her bidding, and expressed his indignation.

"You can show your indignation," she said, "by withdraw-

ing your advertisements from a paper which prints insults to your daughter."

The grocer had lived a long life in a small country town; he was pliant as a reed while the gale blew. He temporised, by saying, that a town in the Far West an editor might be shot for printing a letter of that sort. He went on to say that he wondered at their daring to print it, and then suggested "might not the Law of Libel be invoked?" Many of those who took part in the concert were quite poor people, unable to fee lawyers, "but the Law, my lady, the Law will set them right."

This struck Laetitia as a possible solution. She had not thought of the Law; what she longed for was a party of young men with cudgels catching Mansell in a dark lane. The time had been when a Bynd might have arranged that; but the times were now out of joint.

"I shall see my own lawyer, you may depend upon it, my lady," the grocer said. "Fair criticism is one thing; but this is going too far."

This was something to the good; she felt that she had done one good deed; although, later, she learned that the grocer did nothing. She moved on to the ironmonger.

The ironmonger's daughter had danced at the concert. She felt that she had a good deal of power over an ironmonger. The Bynd Estate was big, and needed a good deal of iron-work, and many farm implements every year. The Bynd account was well worth having. If this man would not see reason, he might find his account closed. However, as it chanced, the ironmonger was away, and could not be back for two days; her schemes for the ironmonger to withdraw his advertisements would have to wait. There remained the corn and forage merchants; she would see them.

At the end of lunch, a telephone message came through from Ponk to say that he would be glad to see her if she would come in that afternoon. So away she went, with her heart full of rage, to the Ponk house near Tatchester. Ponk and his wife, Paddie, received her and poured the balm, not of wisdom but of approval, upon her anger. Ponk did not care one way or the other about a concert in Stubbington; he knew from old experience that such a thing would be pretty bad; but it had chanced that a bit of news had come into his ken; he wanted to speak to Laetitia about it.

"I wanted to see you, Letty, about this Mansell fellow," he said. "He's giving some bronzes by a chap called Faringdon to be put up on Stubbington Bridge; isn't that so?"

"Yes," she said, "he is. He attended our War Memorial meeting, as art adviser, so we were told, and was practically turned out of the meeting for the most offensive rudeness to dear Duckie Twee. Now that he finds that he can have no say in the War Memorial, he gives these two things to be put up where no one can see them."

"Funny thing, that," Ponk said. "Did you know that those two statues were done for the big War Memorial at Snipton, and turned down by the Snipton people?"

"No? Were they?"

"Fact. Here's a note in the current number of the *Mahlstick*: 'The two heroic bronzes, which Mr. Faringdon calls the Female Grievs, are perhaps the finest works done in the last thirty years. We are glad to think that these great works, which manufacturing Snipton has rejected, have been saved by the munificence of Mr. Frampton Mansell, who is placing them at his own cost on Stubbington Bridge in Tatshire.'"

"Why were they turned out of Snipton? Are they indecent? What is this *Mahlstick*?"

"Sort of art magazine," Ponk said. "The bronzes were turned down by Snipton because they gave folk the fan-tods. I don't know whether they are indecent. Probably only gloomy. But one of the Snipton Councillors is a friend of mine; he sent me this paper only this morning, and added that they are pretty grim; I'll show you his letter; I felt that I might ask you about it. Did Mansell tell anybody that the bronzes had been turned down by Snipton?"

"I never heard that he did. The Stubbington people wouldn't have accepted the leavings of any other town."

"So I suppose," Ponk said. "He wasn't bound to tell them. I know nothing about art myself. I suppose he shows public spirit and so forth in giving the things. What were his motives?"

"He is making an effort to show his superiority," Lady Bynd said. "His father was a pie-man's boy in Stanchester, and his grandfather a baker in Condicote. Now that he's made a lot of money by making guns, he poses as a county magnate."

"Well, do come out to see our winter aconites," Ponk said; "we've got a real show of them this year."

They saw the aconites; presently she went away. She had meditated evil for some hours, now, by special providence, a weapon had been given to her; she had poison for her blade. Ponk let her take the copy of the *Mahlstick* and his friend's letter. She went straight to Old Fist in Stubbington, good easy man, and showed him not the copy of the *Mahlstick*, which might have made him glad to be housing the masterpieces of art, but the letter from the Snipton Councillor giving his personal opinion of the bronzes in bitter words.

"I thought that you ought to see the kind of thing you are going to put on our beautiful old historic bridge," she said.

"Did Mr. Mansell tell you that his bronzes had been forbidden in Snipton?"

"Never a word to us," Mr. Fist truly said.

He looked once more through the Councillor's letter. This was what a servant of the public got when he went wading out of his depth in the waters of art. Now there would be a fine old row. Oh, that Old Joe had let the gas lamps stand where the bronzes were to be.

"Something must be done about it," Laetitia said. "You can't let a beautiful old bridge like ours be made a dumping ground for rejected statues. Isn't the bridge an Historical Monument?"

It was, but not in the sense she meant; she could not write to a Society, to bid it wield a bludgeon on Frampton's head.

"Well," Old Fist said, "well, my lady, it's awkward, for we've accepted the bronzes, or statues, or bronze statues, from Mr. Mansold; we've said we'd be glad to have 'em, and thanked him kindly; we wrote him a pretty letter. And he's done up the ground for them now; it's all ready to put them in, or as good as. It'd look so awkward if we were to go back now."

"I don't see that. He must have known all along that the things had been rejected by Snipton. He kept it from you. It's what the Law calls the concealment of a vital fact. He's made you accept the bronzes on false pretences."

Old Fist did not agree about the Law, but he felt aggrieved; he felt that he'd been had. And then, there was this statue, or bronze, or bronze statue of King Stubba; they had as good as said they'd like to have that; in fact they had said it; they'd written him another pretty letter. What if King Stubba, too, had been rejected from somewhere? It was a serious matter, being made to look absurd in the Press. The Press would be on to him about it. And the worst was, that the invitations

had gone out for the unveiling ceremony; or had they gone? It was just possible that they hadn't.

"I think it's exactly like Mr. Mansell," the lady went on; "the kind of malicious thing he exults in doing. He has a spite against the people here, because they know him for what he is. He has planned this to make the place look absurd. He buys these two bronzes as old metal, and knowingly persuades you to put them up. When they are up, everybody will round upon you to say that you have put up Snipton's leavings. Depend upon it, he's laughing in his sleeve at you now. If I were you, I'd write to Mr. Mansell at once, and tell him that Stubbington wants no more of the sweepings from Snipton nor from Mr. Mansell. Tell him to keep his bronzes for himself, and let him lecture his housemaids upon them, which I am told is a way he has."

Old Fist said that "Circumstances alter cases." He dwelt with much pleasure on the fact.

"Yes, that is so," he repeated. "Circumstances do alter cases."

He was, as she knew, a slow-moving man, but she suspected also, that in this case he did not mean to move; it might well be necessary to goad him.

"Well, it's very true," he said. "Circumstances will alter a case."

"I should think that the suppression of a vital fact would alter people's opinion of a man," she said. "If the members of the Council are Englishmen, I should think it would. We are the ratepayers and taxpayers of all this area. We may not be called upon at once to keep up these bronzes. Ultimately we shall. And I think it monstrous that we should have a city's leavings foisted on us in this way, to be maintained at our cost. But it's not going to rest like this. Something's got to be done about it."

She went out on this, leaving Old Fist perplexed, but yet determined that the old hen what had begun to crow (thus he ungallantly described her), should not have it all her own way. He went across from his office and found that the invitations to the unveiling had not yet been sent out. He told the clerks to hold them. He took his car out over the bridge to see what had been done. He found that the sites had been prepared, one on each side, just where the lamp-posts should have been, but for poor old Joe, who was beginning to fail even then.

Meanwhile Laetitia, in her rage, went home, with the devil at her elbow suggesting poison and daggers in the back. On arrival at her home, she had another scheme. She believed in swiftness of action, "and trebly armed is he, who gets his blow in first." With the help of the telephone, as well as invaluable introductions, also telephoned, and suggestions from Ponk, she contrived her attack.

The next morning, a London daily paper had a big photograph of the eastward end of King Stubba's Bridge at Stubington, under the heading: "Save Us From Our Friends. Another Beauty Spot Threatened." There was an article beneath this which said that this beautiful bridge, the reputed scene of King Stubba's victory, was to be used as a base for two bronze figures, lately rejected by the Snipton Town Hall as parts of the Snipton War Memorial. It asked all lovers of the unspoiled countryside to rally to prevent this new act of vandalism, which would bring the fever of modern art into the peace of rural surroundings and the beauty of one of our finest bridges. It said, that as far as could be learned, the Town Council which had accepted the bronzes, had no knowledge of the fact that Snipton had refused to house them. Had they known, nothing would have persuaded them to accept any such gifts. It would be remembered, the writer

continued, that the giver of these bronzes was responsible but a few months ago for an agitation in our columns against the proposed desecration of Mullples Hill. That agitation came too late to be of help. Perhaps this article might come in time to prevent Stubba's old and beautiful bridge from being desecrated with the leavings and rejections of Snipton.

On the other side of the page was a caricature of the two bronzes in place on Stubba's Bridge, with old King Stubba looking at them. It was a clever caricature, and rather a triumph for the young man who had done it. He had only received the photographs of the bronzes from a Snipton photographer at midnight, and the drawing had gone to press before one.

Frampton was not a subscriber to this London paper; he did not see it that morning; as it happened, he was at his Works, trebly busy with routine and a matter that was not routine. His first knowledge of the article came when a Press man telephoned to him on behalf of some syndicate of papers, to ask if he had anything to say about it. He replied that he had not seen the article and had nothing to say about it. The pressman asked if it were true that Snipton had rejected the statues. He replied:

"What else would you expect Snipton to do with works of genius?"

"Oh, so you consider them works of genius, do you?" the pressman asked.

"Good morning," Frampton said, and hung up the receiver.

He had much to do that morning, but at lunch-time saw the paper and at once recognised that the moving spirit had been the angry ham.

"Well, I did make her squirm," he said. "I thought I would. The silly old hen has got busy."

However, he had much to do, and gave no more thought to the matter, except that he registered the fact that she had some sort of access to the Press. An occasional feud or quarrel was nothing to him; he had lots of such things at all times; but a quarrel bulked big in Laetitia's life; she made the most of each one while it lasted. He did not suspect the depth of the rage he had kindled in her. While he brooded on his daily task of making it easy for his countrymen to kill their foes, she in Weston Mulples prepared her second attack. Armed with copies of the newspaper containing "Save Us From Our Friends," she set forth to Stubbington. She called on Old Fist and gave him his copy. He already had one. She then gave a copy to each member of the Council. After this, she contrived that Ponk should say something in the *Tatchester Times*; then she descended on the *Stubbington Gazette*. Harold had gone now; he was in his new office, enjoying himself. She found in his stead a young man who was very happy to be in charge just at the moment when fate had made Stubbington a part of the London news.

"Believe me," he said, "we're giving the question full publicity."

"We" were. The next morning the *Gazette* had a full page about it, with scare-heads and photographs. Three letters, all written in the office, from Pro Bono Publico, War Widow and Indignant Art Lover, protested against this attempt to foist the rejections of Snipton on to a beautiful place like Stubbington. They took different lines, but Frampton, when he read them, noticed that they all made one point, that he had never told the Town Council that the bronzes had been rejected by Snipton. From this, he concluded at once, that the letters had been the work of one hand.

The *Gazette*, following upon the article and correspondence

in the London paper, roused up a pretty stir in Stubbington. In the windows of the *Gazette* offices were photographs of the bridge, of the bronzes, a faked photograph, showing the bronzes in position, and a copy of the cartoon in the London paper. These things drew large numbers of people. The copy of the *Gazette* in the public reading-room had to be renewed four times during the first day from its frequent thumbing and turning.

Letters began to pour in upon the Editor and upon all the members of the Town Council. Old Fist had a meeting that afternoon and said that this matter of these statues, or bronzes, or bronze statues of Mr. Mansold's had come to a point at which something ought to be done. He didn't know anything about art nor genius, and didn't know that he wanted to; but he had an uneasy feeling that Mr. Mansold, though a very kind and clever gentleman, hadn't done quite clean potato by them, not telling them that these things had been turned out by Snipton. Now the fat was in the fire; here were all these letters, lots of them, and the photographs in the London paper, and the telephone ringing all day long, and at midnight, too; why, there were three calls from the London Press after he'd gone to bed last night. It didn't do a man or a council much good to be called a fool in this way.

The members of the Council had all suffered from these attacks; they had felt them acutely; each man of them blamed Frampton for his suffering.

"He kept it dark," they growled. "Any honest man would have told us. How could we know the things had been turned down?"

One or two of them, who wanted a motive, now suggested motive.

"For all we know, he may be in with this sculptor. He

may be his relative. The chap would get a good deal of notice in the papers from having his statues on the bridge. It'd wipe out any unpleasantness from having them turned down at Snipton."

This seemed good sense; but others groped farther for motive. They did not see where Frampton's profit lay. What was he getting or hoping to get out of it? Why was he doing it? He must, they argued, be doing it for something. They themselves did things with purposes, therefore he must be doing it for the hope of benefit. What benefit? "No doubt," they argued, "what he's up to is a seat in Parliament here. He comes down here, and does up *Mullples*; that gives him a place in the constituency; then he gets busy against the Hunt and that, to make himself known; then he gives these statues to the bridge. There'll be a general election in two years' time. You mark my words, that's what he's up to."

It wasn't in the least what he was up to. He had acted from the first with great singleness of purpose, to help Faringdon, and to put two fine works in a fine setting; but when the member of the Council suggested the mean motive, it was received. It explained everything to them. If they had not been indignant, they would have judged more kindly, but one or two correspondents in the London papers had spoken of them as wiseacres, as yokels, and as the local Dogberrys. They were angry now. It is possible that they might be made to look ungracious, in refusing what they had accepted, but they had been made to look absurd, in accepting what had been refused, and their bloods were up. They wrote a letter to Frampton:

Dear Sir (it ran),

You will not fail to have seen the Press comment upon the

statues lately offered by you to the Town Council here. It appears that these statues had been rejected by the Town Council of another borough, which fact having come to light has roused much adverse comment. While appreciating your kind thought in offering the works to Stubbington, the Town Council cannot disregard the local and other comment on the matter, and, therefore, feel unable to maintain their offer of a site for them on the bridge. They, therefore, formally rescind their letter to you of the — ult., and ask you to consider the works of art as finally and definitely rejected.

With our thanks and good wishes,

I am,

Yours faithfully,

*(For and on behalf of the Town
Council of Stubbington).*

This was signed by the Chairman and sent off to Frampton, who received it the next day, when he arrived at *Mullples* for the week-end.

Soon after his reading of the letter a representative of the London Press arrived, asking for an interview. He saw the man and told him that Stubbington had refused the two bronzes; that he had been under no obligation to tell the Town Council anything of their past. Anyone in the least instructed or interested in the arts, or in civic government, ought to have known of their rejection by Snipton, which was a national disgrace. As to the rejection by Stubbington, that was not so much to be wondered at. Snipton did at least belong to the twentieth century. Snipton did at least have an unemployment problem and a model town refuse plant. Stubbington belonged to the century before the last in all things except the corrupt civic government which had given it its Guild Hall. You would

not find many legacies to posterity in the Stubbington of to-day. This rejection of works of art by ignorant, purblind city authorities was going on all over the country. The children of future generations would pay the price in ugly, artless, joyless, hideous dens called towns, and in the stunted life which must follow any rejection of the finer kinds of intelligence. He wished it to be known that he had offered a bronze of King Stubba, by Mr. Faringdon, to the Stubbington people, as well as these Female Griefs, but that the offer would now be withdrawn.

Having expressed himself with a good deal of point and shrewdness to the delighted journalist, he sat down to write to the Town Council, to say that he had been surprised to receive their letter, but noted that the two bronzes were rejected, and asked that they would note that the offer of the bronze of King Stubba was finally and definitely withdrawn.

Though he felt that the angry ham had scored, he thought that the next round would be his. He would now quite certainly make his poisons on the Tittups estate; he would bend all his powers to putting that through. Little Rolly was told to get busy. In the meantime, he had to break the news to Faringdon that Stubbington had rejected the Griefs, and had had the Stubba taken from them. He felt that Faringdon ought to be told this by word of mouth, so went to see him. On his way he thought of things that might be done.

"Look here, King," he said, "the Stubbington gang have turned down the bronzes, and I've withdrawn the Stubba from them. But I want you to go on with Stubba. I'm going to put in my new gas-plant in a model village in the wood above my house. I want you to let me have Stubba for the centre of things. I want to put your two Griefs, one on each side of this approach on the plan. In between, I want an inspired

figure. I want you to get busy on it at once. It is a fine site, and as you can see from Rolly's drawings, the building will be pretty good. In the meantime, I've been to the Sculptors' Galleries in Bond Street, and taken them for June and the first half of July. I want to have a Faringdon show there, and you've got to help me. We'll have all your bronzes and studies; the Griefs'll go in the big room; and you must let me have the drawings for the Stubba and so forth. Then, I've got a good chap to write you up in the catalogue; and we'll get some good reproductions in the catalogue, too. We have time to make the catalogue a collector's piece. You're ripe, as old Haul-over used to say. The next step with you will be a wild success. And this show is going to be the next step. Don't think of Snipton and Stubbington. You'll have all the capitals of the world to choose from after June."

He put life into Faringdon by this. He put life into the direction of the show. He put life into the beginnings of his model factory. In odd moments, when he was not driving himself, he used to say: "You can't put life into yourself." That was true. He seemed to be dead within. A few old loyalties to artists in poverty, the symbol to him of the art-starved England he longed to change, and a few old hatreds of all that had starved his England, alone seemed to keep him going; the rest was routine.

But lest his enemies should think that they had won the battle, he contrived to buy three big pastures stretching from Spirr towards Weston Mullples. On these fields, the farthest of which was in view of the windows of *Coombe*, he determined to build. He did not yet know what he would build.

"A Buddhist Temple would be a good thing," he thought. "That'd make 'em squirm."

But he meant to place there some memorial to Margaret

when he could decide. He thought often of the Buddhist temple, for the story of Buddha meant much to him. He thought that a big notice board on the field, where the angry ham would see it twenty times a day, would be something to the good, so he had one placed there, with the announcement:

PROPOSED SITE OF THE CHURCH OF UNIVERSAL LOVE

That made 'em squirm indeed. There were letters to the Press and anonymous letters in the post. Pob and his friends got busy at once; but Frampton had foreseen their attack. The notice-board was on iron framings and was itself treated with barbed wires and a preparation known as Tikklo. He found a few days later some very fine fragments of tweed on the wires, and learned that Pob had gone to the doctor for an irritation of the skin. Tikklo had done its work. It had made him squirm.

In the middle of May the War Memorial was unveiled in Stubbington. Frampton had not asked about its progress, but had heard that it was being done. He was very busy with his building schemes, and did not see the Memorial till it had been ten days in place. Being then in Stubbington, he went to see it. The flags had been removed and the flowers had withered; the mean design looked at its meanest; and little boys had already put their marks upon the open marble page. There were forty-five wreaths at the foot of the *prie dieu*. He read the inscriptions on three: "To Bert from Mum," "Alf from Daisy," "Joe from a pal." They struck him to the heart. Bert, Alf and Joe had been fine fellows, deserving a better thing than this noble book. Surely something could

be done to show the Stubbington people that art could lay something lovelier than this at the shrine of the honoured dead? He had a fine collection of modern work; why should he not show it and talk about it, and get eminent critics down to talk of it? He could hang the best of his collection in the theatre and lecture to people about it every Sunday afternoon. He determined to do this.

Before he could prepare this work, the Faringdon exhibition began at the Sculptors' Gallery. It happened that the Stubbington rejection, coming so soon after the Snipton refusal, had brought a great deal of attention upon Faringdon's work. Faringdon was now news, he was *arriviste*, he was the idol of Little London; those who did not think him "simpy too marvous" were nowhere. The exhibition was a great success. It was well attended and well-noticed by the Press; people came to it in numbers; all the drawings and studies which were for sale were sold. The edition de luxe of the catalogue has sold since then for ten times its original price.

Among the exhibits were some drawings and wax sketches of the King Stubba. During the exhibition, an Australian from Stubbington, in Victoria, asked if he might have a replica of the bronze, when finished, to put up in the central square there. The new Stubbington had been founded by a settler from the Tatshire Stubbington, a century before; the bronze would be a link the more with the parent town.

This fact was made known to the Press by Frampton; press-cuttings were later sent to the Stubbington Town Council. Just before the exhibition closed, a big London Gallery begged to be allowed to show the Griefs until the autumn. Frampton gladly lent them.

He was happy at the results of his thought. He had made Faringdon's name now, won him a good commission, and

made the Stubbington Town Council to feel exceeding small. One paper had said that it was monstrous that creatures with less art-feeling than potatoes should have the power to refuse masterpieces when offered by one of great public spirit and generosity, such as Mr. Mansell of *Mullples*. This particular cutting Frampton posted to each member of the offending Council marked in red ink with his own hand.

Immediately the show was over, he arranged another exhibition in the theatre at *Mullples*; twenty of his best paintings and seventy of his drawings were hung there, with a couple of screens of Timothy Copshrew's studies of birds. Naunton and Tenor Cobb came down to speak about their work, and invitations were sent to those whom Frampton felt likely to wish to come. Most of these were shopkeepers and shop-assistants in the Stubbington and Tatchester shops, and builders and carpenters working at St. Margaret's. About forty people came for the opening day. After the talks, Frampton gave them all tea, and sent them away happy. He made a little speech, to say that the exhibition would be open on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, from two till six, during the summer-time. He said that he hoped that the members of a local Town Council, referred to lately in the London Press as having less art-feeling than potatoes, would leap at the chance of getting even with the spud at any rate. His words were reported, as such words will be, "with advantages."

Soon after this, there came the anniversary of Margaret's death, which was a sad time for him.

During the rest of the summer he made occasional changes in the exhibition, and added to it cases of examples of prints and book-illustration. On Sundays, he contrived to have talks by artists there. It was not well attended at first; in August, as the holidays drew to an end, people began to come to it;

and in September fifty or sixty would come in one afternoon.

Early in September he went up to St. Margarets with his old father, whom he had not seen for some time. The old man shrewdly judged that his son's settlement at *Mullples* had roused him some enemies; he knew how his son enjoyed putting people's backs up, and how this unwisdom tempered his excellences of energy and insight. He regretted Margaret's death more than he could say.

"You see," Frampton said, "this place will be the centre of the community; a hall, where they can gather for lectures, or plays or gym. I'm putting Faringdon's two Griefs there, and in the middle Faringdon will have a figure of Margaret; he has done some good sketches. But it is all tommyrot trying to make a decent village in this land. It's like trying to make an ear of corn grow roots instead of the other way about. Only yesterday a man at my show said: 'I'm told you have a theatre here on the premises, Mr. Mansell. May I see it, please?' I told him he was in it; that that was the theatre. 'Oh; what? This? I thought this was a billiard-room or so forth, made over for the occasion.' They're used to having a room in a house for a game; they've no thought of having a room for an art, or one of the crafts. I'm going to try a real exhibition in Stubbington in the autumn, something that'll make the London critics take notice. And if that ham woman gives another concert, I'll give a real one, to show them what's the truth, her shabby old pretence, or something with some guts in it."

"You oughtn't to expect too much, Fram," the old man said. "This countryside has been drained, triply drained, of all its best, three times in a hundred years. The chances of commerce drained it once, the prospects of the colonies a second time;

then the War took the rest. You've got the average, dead-level here."

"Well, I want to make it a living level, if it has to be a level."

"It's living, all right, with a good deal of courage and kindness. It's a bit stupid sometimes, I daresay, but then you must make allowances. The world does not need guns and explosives, like you, all the time; it wants to jog along and dig its potato patch, and knock off while the hounds go by. This village that you're building will be based on what? Fear of war, and the hope of killing the other fellow first. Those can't be abiding things in life. These people here used to have fear of God and the hope of salvation. It became fear of squire and the hope of being able to muddle through somehow. It'll change; it is changing."

"Yes. I know it's changing," his son said, "and which way's it changing? To a greater humanity or to a more degraded mechanism? I've grown up in ease to see certain things as important and to have them. I'd be a skunk if I didn't strain a point to let the other chap have his share."

"His share of what he wants, Fram, not of what you want."

"The cheap Press and the Government have killed all personal wants in 'em," Frampton answered. "They soon won't even marry unless they draw a bonus."

The pushing on of the work at St. Margaret's was his chief interest that autumn; he had some hundred and fifty men working there. During the summer, when earth was green and the land dry, this work was not an eyesore; but when the autumn storms came in with wet and the thinning of the leaf, those who had known the empty Waste and woodland cursed Frampton for making such a mess. His lorries had churned

the roads. Annual-Tilter's car stuck there; the angry ham's car stuck there; the Member wrote to complain.

"You wait, my swine," Frampton thought. "When once we get going, your old happy seat in the places of obstruction will be damn near bust."

It fell, that at the middle of that October, he had invited an artist and his wife to *Mullples* for the week-end. He had planned to have a fresco in the maids' sitting-room, with portraits of all the maids in it, and wished to discuss it with the painter. The maids had looked forward to this, and he had had some expectations, for he believed that the young man might do a remarkable work. However, early in the Saturday morning the artist telegraphed that his wife was ill and that he could not come.

Frampton was vexed at this, for he was now at *Mullples* for the week-end without any companion. He had some thought of telephoning to ask his father if he might go there for the week-end, but remembered that his father had to be in London that week-end. It was a raw, cold morning, with the barometer falling and a dull south-east wind coming from a greasy sky. Dirty weather was coming; and as such weather always did, it brought to Frampton a sense of unsettledness and coming danger. He went up and down and in and out, all the morning, unable to settle to anything. He could neither write letters, nor draw designs; he could not think about guns, nor read a book. He loathed *Mullples*. It was the house that he "had built to be so gay with," and this was the gaiety vouchsafed to him: Margaret dead, and himself loathed and loathing. He hated being alone there. He had some thoughts of bolting back to London, but the unsettledness in his mind due to the storm kept him there. He thought of various men whom he might ask to come along for the week-end, but the same

unsettledness kept him from telephoning; as he planned, the opposite of the plan formed itself and checked the plan. Either there was something against the fellow, or it would never do to ask him at such short notice.

He debated and havered thus until lunch-time, unable to ask anybody. By lunch-time he was hating himself and *Mullples*, life and its messes, country and town. After lunch, when it was too late to ask anybody, he regretted that he had been so squeamish. They would have been glad to come, anyway, since sitting by the fire at *Mullples*, over some very good port, would have been better than sitting over a fire in a studio in London.

In the afternoon, the mizzling rain set in and the glass dropped steadily. The leaves were falling from the trees; the garden had lost most of its colour; there were a few roses still and a few wretched little pansies who looked, as Frampton told himself, like artists at a public school. It was a vile afternoon. In his uneasiness, Frampton could not endure the thought of sitting to a book or books; he did not feel like work; he could not draw; something in the storm made him want to dodge it somehow, by getting drunk or going out on a spree. He thought of going for a long walk, but the day was dirty and mizzle was falling; he thought that it would not be worth the mess. He would only be wet through and plastered with mud, and wouldn't enjoy a trudge with his own thoughts, through a wet landscape, with all the views blotted by rain. He wondered if there were any local man who would come out for a talk or a walk. He could think of none who seemed in any way endurable. The rectors and others he put aside. Hard up as he was for companionship, he could not stand those fellows; besides, he would get into disputes with them about faith and so forth. He was half prompted to do half a dozen things, and yet could not feel urged to do any.

The pub of old Hordiestraw seemed the best that the country offered; a game of darts with a few of the lads there and a chat about old times with a few of the oldsters; he would get something good to remember all his days from those fellows. Yet, on second thoughts, he could not stomach the thought of the bar, with its stink of stale tobacco and old drinks and old swinky habituées.

Still, something had to be done; he did not quite see what; he would go melancholy mad there doing nothing till midnight.

He might go back to London and go on a bust. But going on a bust had no attractions for him; the thought of it made him sick. He loathed cinemas; he hated theatres; he disliked concerts, for so often a concert made him endure two hours of what he didn't want for ten minutes of what he did.

One of the maids knocked at the door; he called to her to come in. She was a comely girl who had got herself engaged since coming to *Mullples* to a young man who ran a poultry farm. She brought in the afternoon's post: a bill, two receipts, two begging letters, a request for an autograph, "thanking him in anticipation," an answer to an enquiry about a supply of a new alloy called ferro-baryl, and a copy of the week's *Tatshire Times*.

He looked through the letters; they did not keep him five minutes; then he opened the paper, and at once saw the heading: "Ancient Paintings Laid Bare in Stubbington Church." He read, that two days before (which may have meant two days before the writing of the article, on the Wednesday of the week), some ancient wall-paintings had been laid bare by the removal of some panellings. The works were supposed to be of the fourteenth century, and to represent King Stubba's fight

with the pagans and subsequent conversion to Christianity. These works were in a little church called St. Lawrence in the Peppery. He had not heard of the church and had not seen it, but had heard of the Peppery as a place where people had once made long tobacco pipes; there was a couplet somewhere:

"Sweet at the close of day the mug of mum
And burning herb in clay of Stubbington."

He judged that the light would be bad, but still, he could take a torch; he would go over to see these paintings. A glance at the map of Stubbington showed him the Peppery; it opened off the Market Square; within half an hour he was walking down the Peppery to the church.

He felt sure that on a day so contrary he would find, when he came there, that the church would be closed. In this he was wrong. It was not closed. The door stood open. A woman, who was making the church ready for the next day's service, was emptying the altar flower vases into the gutter.

"Can I see the old paintings?" he asked.

"They're in the side chapel," she said; "the far side there; but you'll not see much of them; it's so dark."

With the willingness to help the stranger and the helpless which is so marked a feature among the English, she followed him into the dark little church and pointed out an inner gloom at the north-east corner.

"It's in there," she said; "up in the corner there the paintings are, if it's the paintings you want to see. But I don't call them paintings myself; only a lot of queer mess, I call them. But you'll see them for yourself, sir. Very old paintings, they're said to be, and all about religion."

He flung the beam of his torch on to the paintings, as far as they had been revealed. They were in a sad state still, with dust, dirt, cobwebs and the slime of slugs upon them. He could make out some big figures, with one bigger figure with a crown, probably King Stubba, wielding a sword. Up above the figures was a conventional design in dull red. He tried to get a good view from all the sides of the chapel, but could not make out much more. He determined to go again on Monday; nay, he would find out the vicar of the church and see to it that these old works were tenderly cared for. Nobody in England to-day could do things so vivid. Why, even the pattern above the figures was better than anyone could do to-day. And who had done these things? He sat down in a pew in the church to stare into the side chapel at the shadowy figures on the wall. Who had done the things in that little fourteenth or early fifteenth century England? He supposed that it was some local chap, for the church could never have been rich, and could not have afforded a man specially down from London to do the work. As he thought of it, he decided that probably King Stubba lay buried in that chapel, and that perhaps the shrine had been great and famous, visited by hundreds from all over England. It may not have been poor, but very rich.

He sat on there, wondering about who had done the design. "It was probably somebody here," he thought. Somebody here had the knack and guts. Such chaps are in the town here still, perhaps. Those chaps at Hordiestraw's, playing darts, could have done it if they had wanted to draw, instead of to ride on motor-bikes.

He was very lonely suddenly, longing unbearably for Margaret. She would have said:

"Of course, it's the same race still; we must find those talents

again and set them free and see that they can grow."

His grief for her, which was sometimes numb, now gnawed unbearably.

"My God," he muttered, "I wish to God I had died with you, instead of living on for this."

He thought of what the old painter of the designs had probably believed about death and punishment after death.

"Life is punishment enough for most sinners," he thought; "no more punishment than life is necessary."

He thought that he would go on to speak to the vicar; he asked the woman, who was now shaking out the mats, where he could find him.

"You won't find him on a Saturday," she said. "He always goes out to Tatchester almshouses of a Saturday; but a letter would find him. She thought that she ought to say something about the paintings. "Very strange old things, the paintings, sir," she said. "Still," she added cheerfully, "it shows you what they thought was decoration, years ago."

"Yes," he said, "they show you that."

Something made him think of *Twelfth Night*: "'Tis but Fortune; all is Fortune." He often thought of Fortune in these days. What was she? He knew Dante's description of her: "Necessity compels her to be swift"; but there was such a thing as a stable Fortune, in dynasties and great families, which endured for centuries. What was that? Well, what could you call it but Fortune? He did not rail at that kind of Fortune, but he was bitter at the superior Fortune being inferior in intelligence, in feeling, in the mixture of the two called tact, and in cultivation, and priding itself on possession, family, the front row seat, and the item in the society news column, and also, largely, on the power these things gave of making want of general intelligence function as its opposite. His own

Fortune puzzled him. Here he was, called from a low-class family, as it was reckoned, the son of a man who had made much money by a clever device, and himself very clever at all dodges and devices of destruction and explosion. He was wealthy; he was shrewd, swift; and as it seemed, possessed of all things, but at the instant of his attainment, everything had been dashed from him; he had lost his throw; he was a failure in life; he had not won the world he had set out to win. He had won the crown, and put it on, only to find that the crown was tin and had no kingdom attached.

He passed out of the church into the evil weather, with its failing light and beginning storm. He had planned to go to the left, to see the forlorn water-meadows; he had thought that they would be a good image of desolation. Something, he knew not what, perhaps only a gust or draught of wind coming up the Peppery against him as he left the church door, made him say: "No, not the water-meadows." He turned, instead, to the right, and was soon in the lights and glistening pavings of the Market Square. He had left his car there, and was just about to turn again to the right, towards it, when something caught his eye on the wall of the Corn Exchange, on the other side of the open space. It was a big notice-board, nearly covered with what seemed to be a design from Botticelli's *Primavera*. He wondered what could have made her venture to a place like Stubbington, and crossed the Square to find out.

When he stood beneath the notice-board, he saw that the Spring was subtly changed, to show that she was dancing; it had been done with a good deal of ribald dash, but what brought ribald dash to Stubbington? Underneath was the announcement:

THE SQUARE PEG

CIRCASSIAN BALLET
FOR ONE DAY ONLY
UNPARALLELED ATTRACTION
AT STOKELY-PITTE HALL
MATINEE AT 3 P.M. EVENING 8 P.M.
IN LES CIRCASSES.
THE TOLTECS. NENUPHARS ROUGES

"Poor devils," he muttered, "what on earth can bring Circassians to Stubbington of all places and on a day like this? Poor devils. What brought them here?" He knew nothing about Circassians, except what Tolstoi tells. "And ballet, too," he muttered. "What can bring ballet here, a thing of rhythm, beauty and delight, to that awful hall where the concert was?"

Well, ballet belonged to the world of the imagination, which Stubbington had ceased to believe in. He would go to it, if only as a protest against everything that Stubbington stood for. He would be late, for it was already seven minutes to four, but still, even if they were only doing one of their three pieces it would be life and beauty in a day of death.

"Good old Stubbington," he said, "once famed as the rottenest borough in England, now, without much question, the deadest. Forwards, to its champion morgue, the Stokeley-Pitte."

He had called it Stubbington's champion morgue, but when he drew near to it a few minutes later, he felt that few cities could have a morgue more gloomy; the supreme Morgue, "Death's high capital and kingly seat," would not seem a more awful negation of life. There it was in the cold and wet, vast, mean and hideous, with little suggestions of Gothic, and little hints of Byzantine, the foul day dying, the streets unlighted, though there were lights in some of the windows. The wind

was rising and the rain becoming worse. Leaves were blowing about and some little boys had recently been at the posters near the door and had torn them into streamers which now lay and sometimes flopped on the pavement. Across the road from the hall a small, much battered car was parked. The house seemed to be deserted; the lights were on in the porch, but no signs showed of audience, and no noise came from within.

"I suppose the Circassians realised what they were coming to," he said, "and cancelled the engagement."

He walked to the entrance. The porch was covered in at the sides with panes of white and yellow glass, placed alternately; beyond the porch, in a gloomy passage, were a table and chair, the table bearing books of tickets and a paper of tax stamps. A woman was talking volubly and bitterly in French, not far away. Frampton beat with his foot upon the floor for the ticket-seller, but nobody answered. The draughts were running along the corridor and causing the frame of a picture to clack upon the wall. The picture was a much-foxed engraving of a whiskered man in uniform, General Stokeley-Pitte, no doubt. The window of the passage had had a stone through it; the rain had come in there in a long, dark smear down the wall. At the back of the house something whined and sobbed. It didn't sound cheerful enough to be a dog in pain; Frampton thought it must be the hot-water system refusing duty.

The door at the end of the passage, which opened into the auditorium, suddenly pushed back; a young, fresh-coloured man, whom Frampton remembered to have seen more than once in Stubbington Market Place, came towards him.

"Is the show cancelled?" Frampton asked, "or can I have a ticket?"

"They've only just come," the lad said. "They don't know

if they'll dance or not. They don't talk no known Christian language. Then there's some mistake about the tickets. You see, they've got the wrong days on 'em. But Mr. What's-his-name'll be here in a minute; he's the one that'll know."

After the lad had gone on, the tirade in French was taken up suddenly by a second voice, and rose to a crescendo, ending suddenly in what seemed like a slap. Almost at once, a foreign-looking man came out of a room, swaying upon his feet, being a little drunk. He called Frampton: "Tomás, Tomás," then, finding that it was not Tomás, he made a gesture of apology and swayed back. The lad returned a minute later, bearing a spanner and a coil of insulated wires.

"I can't make out if they mean to dance," he said. "They don't talk human speech at all. And these tickets; they've made a fair old muddle, if you ask me. These are next week's tickets for Sulhampton. And they never got their posters out here till this morning. That don't do, not in Stubbington, for people make their plans ahead."

"Have you an audience waiting to see the show?" Frampton asked, for it was an hour and more after the advertised time of the performance.

"Oh yes, sir," the lad said, "there's some of 'em waiting. But excuse me, sir; perhaps this is Mr. What's-his-name."

"Who is Mr. What's-his-name?"

"The sort of manager. Perhaps this is him on the pavement."

It was not Mr. What's-his-name, but two young women, who asked if they were too late. When told that they were not, they said that they had run almost all the way, having only just seen the poster. "But," they added, "what a day for the dancers."

The lad said that it was indeed a day, and that Mr. What's-his-name would be in in a moment. Perhaps they would go

into the hall and sit down. He could come to them about their tickets later. The elder woman asked if those were not the tickets on the table? He said no, those were the tickets for next week; but Mr. What's-his-name would be in in a minute. Would they just take a seat? They went into the hall. Frampton saw that the elder woman took a shrewd look at him. She knew, plainly, that he was the wicked Mr. Mansell of *Mullples*.

Frampton walked in after them and took a seat in the front row, opposite the middle of the stage. The lad, who had followed him, bent at a projector. Frampton looked about him at the patient victims of muddle, sitting waiting for the show. There were about thirty, all told. Just behind him a young man and woman were smoking cigarettes and making audible comment on those present. In a minute the projector began to cast bright lights in different colours on to the curtain. A second lad, who had been grovelling on the floor with wires, now rose to his feet and wiped his hands, with the remark that she should go now, a fair treat; and he would run in and tell Mr. What's-his-name. From behind the lowered curtain there came an intermittent noise of planing.

At this moment the door opened; a big, square, black-haired, military-looking man came in; he was a red-faced, healthy fellow, with long black moustaches, waxed at the ends. He reminded Frampton of a light-heavyweight boxer whom he had seen years before.

"This is Mr. What's-his-name," he told himself.

The man walked with a slight limp on to the stage, where coloured lights played all over him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "I regret that you've been inconvenienced owing to the delays. The performance will begin in wan minute from this."

His speech, with its strong Irish accent, convinced Frampton that this was the boxer, Tiger Mick, or Mike the Tiger, or Tiger Mike.

Having spoken, Mr. What's-his-name went out into the passage. Frampton followed to buy his ticket, and two tickets for the seats adjoining his. He found the ex-boxer seated at the table unpacking a new set of tickets from a paper.

"And what can I do for you, sorr?" he asked, looking up.

Frampton bought his tickets and then said:

"Excuse me, but I think you once won me a five-pound note. Didn't you once box a Carib called The Mill Wheel?"

"Ah, were you there, sorr?" the man said, smiling. "And ye backed me? Indade, I'm glad. But that was before the War. I got a bullet in me leg and limped after. Now I run this Noah's Ark, and there's damn few doves in it, believe me."

"Perhaps I can have a word with you later," Frampton said. "I'll get back to my seat."

He got back, but found that he need not have hurried. The projector was squirting coloured light most oddly.

"What it wants really," the electrician was saying, "is a new one. This one gets as hot as hot. One of these days it'll go."

The couple in the row behind Mansell lit up new cigarettes from a briquet. They had been smoking for the last twenty minutes, but at this moment, the lad, who seemed now to be door-keeper and in charge of the front of the house, interfered. He left the projector and came to the couple.

"Beg pardon, sir; beg pardon, miss," he said, "but smoking's not allowed in here."

"Isn't it?" the young woman said, puffing out smoke. "Isn't it really?"

"No, miss," the lad said. "The police don't allow it in here."

"Fancy that," the young woman said.

A red glare from the machine fell upon the curtain; three men in Circassian war-dress gathered about the piano, that same piano which had so distressed Frampton at the concert. One of the three was a wild-looking man with less brow than Frampton had seen on any human head. He tossed back his hair, glanced at his fellows, and with a gesture of contempt struck a jangle on the keys. The tangle and tinkle seemed to be new to him. He glanced again at his fellows, one of whom played the Circassian trompe-marine, with a bow; the other, the Circassian pan-pipes. Together, they swept into the now familiar strains of the *Nenuphars Rouges*, then new to Frampton, and strangely moving.

The door-keeper came in hurriedly and handed programmes. Frampton bought one and read the foreign names of the musicians. The two young things behind him had not ceased to smoke. Frampton, who disliked their tobacco, wished that one of the Circassians might bowstring them or put them into sacks and then into the Bosphorus, which he had read was usual somewhere in those parts. But he was now caught by the music and gave no heed to the smokers.

The pan-pipes man was a master of his instrument; he was stirred by them to excitement, so that he rose from his seat, faced the audience, swayed about, and almost danced as he piped. Frampton was thrilled to see him. Here was a man who believed in art and showed that he enjoyed it. This was how one should respond to art. The two young things made comment.

"The dear man's absooty gaga."

"Priceless. Absooty."

"Absooty marvous."

But the prelude to the *Nenuphars Rouges* is moving work. Before he reached the finale, the pan-pipes man was dancing

visibly; then the music leaped to its climax, the light brightened, the curtain lifted and there was the stage, newly planed over along its seams.

The stage had been set for the *Red Waterlilies*, Scene One. A backcloth representing a wild scene in Mount Ida was now so lit that the waterlilies in the river were red as blood. The music slowly worked its preparation. Presently, the Nymphs of the Gorge glided in *sur les pointes*, with their faces set in the rigid smiles of the ballet. They danced the dance of the hallowing of the gorge. Frampton watched them. They were not dancing specially well, he thought, yet he watched them with interest, very glad that he had come. He was rapt out of Tatshire and the thoughts of Spirr Wood and the angry ham; he was in Ida, in some century not well defined, but existing in the soul for ever. The music was so uncanny, that even those three men, one of them playing on that impossible old hack piano, and those three muscular young women, made him feel that unearthly beings were moving there.

Presently the immortals had ended; they danced away. The folk of Troy were dancing on, followed by the elders; the three young heroes were going to dance for the hand of the princess. As the Trojans gathered at the back of the stage, the music seemed to Frampton to take another turn round his heart and tighten there.

A young woman came forward to begin the celebrations. Frampton had not seen her, had not at any rate noticed her, till the music brought her forward. Now, as she glided out, he looked at her, and felt the blood rush to his head, so that a red mist covered his eyes for a moment. It was Margaret come back out of the grave. The red mist cleared from his eyes; he could see more clearly. He leaned forward and dug all the nails on his fingers into his knees. The girl was

Margaret. He almost cried aloud to her. It was almost more than he could bear.

"It is her wraith, perhaps, come to summon me," he thought. "Oh please, God, I can be gone from all this folly with her, for she was my Fortune, and I cannot live after my Fortune has gone."

He looked about the dingy hall. It seemed to have disappeared. He looked back at the stage. There was Margaret dancing; her face, indeed, painted into the mask of the stage, but with that beautiful hair, and exquisite grace of body and movement. It was Margaret come back to him. He watched her, quite breathless, till she almost drew him to the stage. Others were dancing now, but he had no eyes for the others. Who could she be? Who was she? He had a programme in his hand; he tried to read the name, but the light was too dim for him to read it. Besides, he wanted to watch her every movement.

She ended her dance at last, and flung herself down upon skins at the left back of the stage and lay there looking, indeed, at the actors dancing on the stage, but through them directly at himself. It seemed to him that her eyes were never off his face. He told himself that, of course, she was staring directly into the glare of the light and that she could not possibly see him. But he met her eyes and stared back into them, more deeply moved than he had ever been in his life. He did not want to see what was happening on the stage. The young men were competing in deeds of skill and strength for the hand of the princess. It flashed into his mind that probably one of the young men was this Margaret's husband or lover. Well, if that were so, he would win her from him. Then the play caught him. The young men had tried their best, one of them was out of it and retired broken-hearted. Then the

winner won his last trial and danced off with all the crowd.

Frampton cursed the dim light. There was a synopsis of the play in the programme, and also a list of the parts and dancers, but he could not read them. He could not read one word.

"Of course," he told himself, "of course, this is only an illusion. She is all so made up that she may be quite unlike Margaret. It was an accident of make-up. It is just chance and took my breath away. Probably I was quite wrong about it."

However, at that moment, the Margaret danced back to the loser left lonely on the stage, and again his heart stood still. This was not an illusion. Make-up or no make-up, this was Margaret's self. He was not wrong about it. Again he clutched himself. What if this were Margaret's wraith come here to call him? What if this divine dance and strange music were the realities of heaven? What if he were to have done with all the folly and unreality of guns and explosives, the furnaces, the castings, the excitements of the ranges, the angers, hatreds, and stupidities of this district in Tatshire, and in a few moments to dance into the coloured light to be with Margaret for ever?

He perceived the drift of the play now; it was all made clear to him by her. In all this succession of dancing the uncanny music of the Caucasus kept Frampton stirred as never in his life before. He watched intently.

"Perhaps," he kept telling himself, "perhaps it is all an illusion or hallucination. I've been thinking too intently of Margaret. I shall wake up soon in my bed at *Mullples* and find that it is all a dream. But no, this is not a dream. But it cannot be Margaret. It must be some half-sister of hers, by some other mother. It cannot but be that. Still it is so like. If it be not a dream it will surely be a nightmare. It cannot but

be that she is married to one of these men. She will not look at me. How can I speak with her? I must get at the manager, there. Suppose she is Mrs. Tiger Mike, or his mistress?

From time to time in the dance she floated well to the front of the stage. She was not of the world's greatest dancers, he could see that, but she was very good, good enough to be in the company of even the greatest. Five or six of the company were good enough for that. It was a marvel that such a company should be in such a place. He watched and watched. It was Margaret, from hair to dancing shoes.

The curtain fell at last; the red light ceased to glare; the electric lights in the roof of the hall went on. The audience applauded. As most of the audience was sitting right at the back, it seemed strangely remote, but they stamped with their feet and clapped. The curtain rose and Frampton saw the entire cast ranged in a semi-circle, taking their call. He applauded vigorously; the young woman behind him asked for another cigarette, lit it and again puffed, so that the scented smoke drifted on to Frampton's cheek. He didn't mind that now; he went on clapping. The curtain fell, but rose again so that they might have the satisfaction of a second call. Then, presently, it fell, and the dancers were free to go to change for the next ballet.

He looked at his programme. There in the list of the dancers was the name. The part of the girl was to be danced by Margarita Sorya. So that was her name: Margarita Sorya. She was a Margaret, as he had thought, but she was his, meant to be his, given back to him from the grave by some miracle of life. She was the other half of his uncompleted being. She was there on the other side of the old, torn, moth-y, red-and-yellow curtain, probably talking with her husband, he thought bitterly, or in some foul and

littered, cold dressing-room, trying to get changed for the next ballet. She would probably be in that. It would be *Les Cirrasses*, he supposed. Well, he had half an hour to wait, probably, for it generally took a ballet company twenty minutes between dances, and this company seemed likely to take longer than most. He rose up. As he did so, he saw the girl behind him nudge her companion, puff a blast of smoke from her rouged lips and heard her drawl: "The skunk who shut Spirr Wood." He turned and looked at them as he went out; the young man seemed somewhat scared at her remark, but she was defiant; she stared back, though with half-shut eyes, and blew another blast of smoke right at him. At that instant, Tiger Mike appeared and addressed her.

"Madam," he said, "will you please put your cigarette on this ash-tray?"

"I've not finished it yet," she said.

"I know, madam," he answered, "but the orders of the police are that no one is to smoke here. But there is a fine yard at the back, if you should want the use of it. You could smoke there and welcome."

She relinquished her cigarette with the remark, that she had never before been in a place where she couldn't smoke.

Frampton went out into the rain. Somewhere within a few yards of him, in one of the ignobler dens of that mean building, was his Margaret given back to him. He was in such a turmoil that he knew not quite what to do. Going back presently to the entrance corridor, he saw Tiger Mike talking to the young man who took the tickets. He was talking about the lady who had smoked.

"She said: 'I've never before been in a place I couldn't smoke.' Indade there's few times that painted Jezebel has been in the inside of a church. Did ye mark her nails now? All

done up red as though she'd been scratching her lips. Can I do anything for ye, sorr?"

"Yes," Frampton said, "indeed you can. Might I have a few words with you?"

"Deed you can. Will you just run round to the light boy, young fellow, and say it'll be all of twenty minutes before there's one of 'em ready?"

The young man went off into the heart of the gloomy building. Frampton was alone with the Tiger.

"You haven't changed much since I saw you win your title," Frampton said. "I'd like to shake hands with you, if I might be allowed."

"Indeed, I'll be proud," the Tiger said.

"This company," Frampton asked: "I gather you had trouble in getting here."

"Trouble, is it? Begob, you're right, sorr. We've been in one long mess and that's the truth. The manager, that was, cleared out on us with the gate. He's the boy let us in about these tickets. Then our lorry broke down on the road, and our 'bus, that we tour in, went the wrong road. Still, here we are."

"How about lodgings for the night?" Frampton asked. "Have they all got lodgings in this place? It's a noisome hole."

"Ah, they'll find some place," the Tiger said, "between the act and to-night's show; they'll all find some place."

"You mean they haven't yet?"

"Not a one of them. But there's pubs and places. It's nothing. They'll find spots. There's always places in England'll take 'em. The police'll fix them, if they can't find any for themselves."

"It's no great fun running round a place like this in a storm," Frampton said. "It will be dark by the time this show's over. Do you mean to say these poor souls have to change

from their dancing things, fly off to find lodgings, get food of some sort and then fly back to the evening show?"

"They're used to it. It's nothing. Use is second nature."

"Have you any place to go?"

"Sure, sorr. I go to my garage: he's promised me a bed."

"I could give five of them shelter," Frampton said. "I'm not married, but I've got a big house doing nothing, and I could take them to and fro. You may think perhaps I'm running a bawdy house. I'm not. I'm interested in the show and would like to help. It's going to be a bad night. Do you go on to Sulhampton to-morrow?"

"No, Sorr, we'd go on to Sulhampton Monday morning."

"I've got a housekeeper," Frampton said. "She'd look after the women."

"I doubt there's many housekeepers is used to this sort," Mike said.

Frampton had thought that, too, but he was ready to try.

"Here is my card," Frampton said. "If you will take my offer to five of the women, and tell them that I have a housekeeper who will make them at home, and who will come for them in a car at the end of this performance, if they choose to take the offer. But perhaps you have married couples. Two married couples and a girl, I could take those, if they would like."

"We got no married couples, worse luck," Mike said. "This bunch isn't like the circus, nor yet like a touring company, with *East Lynne* and the *Harbour Lights*. I never was with a menagerie before, and begob it's my last time. I'll take your offer to them, Sorr, and in the meantime, I thank you kindly."

Frampton saw that Mike acquitted him of running a brothel, and put him down as an odd sort of madman, such

as was said to inhabit these islands. He closed the unwanted tickets; it was unlikely that anyone would ask for a seat now. He said:

"Will you just wait here, Sorr? I'll bruit it to them."

He took the card, glanced at it carefully, and vanished down the passage which led to the dressing-rooms. Faint wafts of cheap scent and cigarette smoke came from those parts. As Frampton waited, the young man and woman from the house came slowly out of the hall. The young woman was smoking. She stared at Frampton, who stared back. At the passage end, she paused and said:

"Shall we go to their dressing-rooms and tell them how lousy they are?"

"I wouldn't," the young man said, "Circassian blood, you know. These chaps are very handy with the knife."

"Lousy day," the young woman said, looking out of the outer door.

"Absooty pute."

"I suppose they take us for the bloods, waiting for the soubrettes."

"Like to cut?"

"What else can we do, till it's time for Crissies?"

"You could see over the church," the young man said. They giggled.

"What's the time now?"

"Twelve past five. We'll wait till half-past and then cut and have a cocktail at Paggies'. We'll have earned it."

They sauntered back past Frampton; she stared at him as she passed; he returned her stare. Tiger Mike returned just as she passed him. Tiger Mike was like a living conscience.

"Lady," he said, "will you put that cigarette out now? Smoking's not allowed in here, neither in the hall nor in any

passage. The orders of the police are clear. Put it out now. I told you of that before."

"Were you speaking to me?" she asked.

"Yes, lady."

"I'm glad to know. Don't let it become a habit, will you?"

"Young gentleman," Tiger Mike said to the lad, "you must ask your lady to go outside to smoke, or take her from here."

At this point, Miss Adobe came out with Eldrida, whose excitements always went straight to her liver and was now beginning to feel their onslaught. They went out hurriedly.

"Do you hear?" the young woman said. "We're absooty chucked out, on our ears; absooty marvous. Get my wrap. We'll leave this and see the church. We can smoke there."

She moved to the outer door, and continued to smoke there, while her young man fetched the wraps from the hall. Mike turned to Frampton.

"I put it to them, Sorr," he said. "The five here on this sheet will thank you kindly, Sorr."

He took the sheet, without looking at it.

"Is there a telephone here?" he asked.

"No, Sorr, this place is not on."

"I must get through to my housekeeper. I'll go telephone. The show won't be beginning?"

"You'll have lashings of time, Sorr," Mike said.

He had seen enough on his trip to make him sure of that.

Frampton went out into the rain. When he had gone a few yards up the road, he looked at the precious list, carefully screening it from the rain. It was written or scrawled with eyebrow-stick or some dark kind of grease-paint on the packing-paper which had covered the supply of tickets. It bore the names of five persons: Sorya, Marianela, Aranowski, Godelof,

Zapritska. Sorya was the first of them; she was to be there, and she wasn't married. His luck was in.

He telephoned at a little tavern; he got through to Mrs. Haulover and gave his orders, that there would be five strange young women at *Mullples* for the week-end; that their rooms were to be made ready at once, with fires lighted, and that she was to come down at once in the big car to welcome them. It was somewhat of a blow to Mrs. Haulover, who guessed that something unusual had occurred. He told her to get through to a Stanchester firm, which knew him and happened to be open on Saturdays, to insist that any extra stores needed should be sent by road at once.

"That's that, then," he concluded. "The sooner the quicker."

He judged that Mrs. Haulover had guessed that a staggering chance had fallen. He went back to his place as the curtain rose upon the *Toltecs*.

It falls to few to see their late espoused Saints brought to them like Alkestis from the grave. For all the longing that goes up to Heaven, that mercy is seldom granted. When the life of the heart dies, the soul is all unlit and unhelped, so that it broods and sickens. He had been unlit and unhelped since Margaret's death; nothing had been happy for him. Now, suddenly, Margaret was dancing before him; the lost chance of life was restored. This was Margaret given back by life; there could be no disloyalty to the dead in turning to her.

Yet, suppose she were already engaged? Suppose it? Why, it was pretty certain that a woman of such beauty and cleverness would have lovers by the dozen. And what would she think of a bachelor, who asked five strange women to stay for the week-end? She would have met plenty of pretty queer bachelors of all ages, touring in the provinces, and this sort among them.

He longed to speak to her and hear her voice. She held her head exactly as Margaret had done; surely her voice would be the same. Would she speak English? Would she prove to be Circassian? Was she in some strange way related to Margaret? Suppose she told him that she was so sick of the attentions of men that she wanted to be left alone?

After the curtain fell, he went out into the rain, to try to quiet his thoughts. In the Market Place he bought a box of cigarettes for Tiger. He found the Tiger sitting at the table in the passage.

"I've brought you a few cigarettes," he said.

"Indeed, Sorr, that's kind of you. I smoke a lot of them things, now that I do not have to mind meself."

"It's a bad day for business."

"Ye'd not get many worse. This has been a bad tour. Run by bad men and rotten."

"Are your people, the dancers, Circassians?"

"There's all sorts, the same as in Noah's Ark. There's many of 'em might be anything, they've just traipsed about touring with dancers all over the place. They'd be hard put to it to say what they are, if pressed. But they've been every place, and know nothing of any, except they danced there one time."

"That was a great night at the club," Frampton said, "when you put it all over the Mill Wheel."

"It was a great night for me," Mike said. "But ye said you backed me?"

"I did," Frampton said.

"Indeed, there's not many did. Me manager said: 'Now, Mike, they've offered me five hundred quid for you to lose. I've told 'em that if they talked like that to me, I'd turn you loose on 'em.' They said: 'Well, tell your lad he'll get no more jobs here nor any place, if he puts the Mill Wheel out. Let

him just chew on that and give me a hint in the morning."

"Was that the Mill Wheel's set?"

"No, Sorr, it was just a set that fixed things. Me manager said to me: 'Mike, we got a tough bunch against us. They got a lot of dough and want to get the Mill Wheel right up in Gee. But you're a straight lad, Mike, and I believe you can put the Mill Wheel out. If you can't, you do your damndest, and you'll make your name, at least.'"

"I remember the betting was ten to one on the Mill Wheel," Frampton said.

"What made ye back me, Sorr?" the Tiger asked.

"I liked the look of you. I saw you weigh in in the morning. I thought you looked just a shade the better man."

"And indeed I was," Mike said, "but only just a shade. He nearly got me in the first round. He caught me a welt on the jaw that made me think I was gone. He learned me sense with that welt, not to come so near asking for trouble. I was a glad lad, I tell you, Sorr, when I got my chance in the seventh round."

"I used to see the Mill Wheel later, in the halls," Frampton said. "What became of him?"

"He's in Hollywood, Sorr, where all the lads go now. He trains tigers for the films. He calls himself Zendavesta, the Brahman Tiger King."

"About these ladies on your list?" Frampton asked, "can you tell me if any of them talk English?"

"Miss Sorya's English; her mother was English, at least, I believe. Miss Marianela's French; she talks a fair whack of English. The Aranowski, I don't know what she is; nor the other two. Zapritska sounds like something to eat in one of these foreign joints. They don't talk much English, those last three, but you may make your meaning clear to them. They're

not what they call temperamental, them three birds. We've some in this outfit are. They're the lads to lie down and scream on you, if you ask them to be ready for the train by noon. But you'll have no trouble, Sorr, with your lot. They'll be on their company manners."

"When my housekeeper comes, I'll get you to introduce me," Frampton said.

They talked for a while of the whirling Mill Wheel, now Zendavesta, whom Mike had laid on the mat. Mike loved to talk of the days of his fame; few folk remembered Tiger Mike. Suddenly from one of the dressing-rooms came a wild and angry outburst, followed by screaming.

"For the love of me," Mike said, "there's that Tzigajzwsky again. She's jealous of the Trojan king, the long bird who necks the rum. She'll have his eyes out, if I don't watch it."

He was off to the battlefield, but the Trojan king came out bleeding before he reached the door. He was the tall drunken man who had called for Tomás. Blood was running down his cheek from scratches, and Tzigajzwsky followed up her foe with a volley of old dancing shoes.

"Say now, Birdie," Mike began, "you mustn't mind that big mutt."

He drew her away into the room. Sounds of storm followed, while the audience waited. Presently Mike appeared, to say that it was unfortunately not possible to perform *Les Circasses*; they would substitute for it, with their permission, the famous *Divertissements*, which the audience would find described on the back pages of their programmes. He did not say so, but there was a pretty scene raging at the back at that moment. However, he was used to raging scenes, and having been in the ring could deal with most that came his way.

The curtain rose upon Marianela in her famous Chilian success of *La Cachuca*, with big black, languishing eyes and a pair of castanets; her genius was much more for this kind of dance, than for any other. She had a real success, and was recalled. Frampton noted the admiration of the lad at the door. He heard him say:

"Those are the sort of girls that stick a knife into a chap."

Sorya came fourth upon the list, with what was called a Russian Moon Dance. As she was less made up for this than in the dance before, her likeness to Margaret was more startling.

Soon, the performance ended with the playing of God Save the King. He went out to the hall. The rain was falling heavily now, as though it would do nothing else till dawn. He stood staring out into it, while folk put on their coats and pushed past him.

Frampton's big car drove up with Mrs. Haulover. After a very few minutes, one by one, the five dancers appeared. Mike introduced them: Miss Aranowski, a tall, very strange-looking lady, with pale eyes and a vehement soul; Miss Zapritska, still stormy from some trouble of the dressing-rooms, with a twitching nostril above some suggestions of moustache. Third was Miss Sorya. As she came forward into the light, Frampton saw Mrs. Haulover start; he knew at once that the reason for his inviting them was plain to her. She spoke English; she greeted Mrs. Haulover, and Frampton with a few words of thanks and then moved aside, to make room for Godelof, tall, handsome, with red-gold hair of great beauty, and Marianela, a little, wiry, lean, quick, brown-faced woman with decisive movements. Frampton packed them into the car and spread the rugs about them. Then the car drew away, with Zapritska lighting a cigarette.

He watched the car out of sight; then bought tickets for Mrs. Haulover and some of the household for the night's performance.

"You've done a good deed, Sorr," Mike said, "taking them girls in. It's no life for a girl at all. Men's different, but a girl likes a home to go to. Even I gets sick of these one-night stands, year in, year out."

Frampton took his own car, and offered Mike a lift to his garage; but Mike had something to say to the boys who were setting the stage for the evening show.

When he reached home, he found the Godelof sitting by the blaze of the fire, which made her red-gold hair shine at its best. Aranowski joined them; she slid her neat, long foot along the floor and said that that was the place for a dance, not that *sale* hall in the town.

"Dance, if you like," he said. "But I have a little old theatre here. To-morrow you could dance in it with much greater effect, if you'd like to."

"A theatre? Here?" she cried.

Zapritska joined them at this instant.

"You 'ave a theatre here?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "but it hasn't been used for some century or so, except as a dog-kennel."

"Perhaps," Godelof said, with meaning, "perhaps we could dance the *Circasses* there, to-morrow; not be put out by some fracas of the *Halles*, no."

The Zapritska would have replied to this in the Goneril manner, but Sorya and Marianela came in together at this instant, and Marianela caught sight of Tenor Cobb's big painting.

"Ha," she cried, "you 'ave a Cobb?"

"So you like Cobb?" he said.

"I adore Cobb," Marianela said. "That is well touched, that one. I 'ave sit to Cobb for the 'and. I 'ave the good 'and."

She held it out; she spoke the humble truth; she had a very good hand.

"And do you paint?" he asked.

"I cannot paint, alas. I am *vagabonde*."

"A very good thing to be," he said.

"It's like Teaxs," Sorya said, "fine for men and dogs, but hell on women and oxen."

He had not heard this before and laughed at it.

"Come along now and eat and drink," he said. "You've not too much time, since you have to get back and make up for to-night."

Mrs. Haulover was a good hostess.

After the meal, while they were waiting to start for the Hall, Frampton heard Aranowski ask Zapritska in a low voice, whether Mrs. Haulover were Mr. Massilio's *amie*. Zapritska replied that in England all the men were *vierges* and all the women like to remain so. Then they went off to the Hall, singing as they went.

He watched the evening's performance with a beating heart. In two of the three ballets Sorya danced; in the *divertissements* she danced a *bayadere*. He did not care what the others on the stage did; he sat staring at her through his glasses whenever she appeared, not doubting that she was Margaret come back to him.

"She will have a lover; she cannot fail to have a lover," he kept thinking. "But I'll beat him from her."

When she was on the stage, the certainty that she must have a lover somewhere made him sick with jealousy. The grace of the creature so often made him sure that she was Margaret's spirit, moving as Margaret had never moved. Presently, they

danced *Les Sylphides*; Margaret danced the *Prelude*. She made that dingy stage an unearthly garden hovered in by the butterflies of the soul.

The storm had gathered by this time into something of its full intensity. The Hall contained an audience of twenty-nine persons, who had come, they did not quite know why, or because tickets had been given to them. Some of these would no doubt have left early but for the pouring of the rain. Frampton looked at them from time to time. They looked unreal in that place and light; they were unreal; they were not feeling. He was more deeply moved than ever before in his life; he was shaken to his foundations. At the same time, he was confirmed in his certainties. He was on the side of Margaret and this her spirit; he would make Spirr a sanctuary; he would fight the insensitiveness of stupid Stubbington, which sat so dead and lout-like while this Margaret danced. He thought of Faringdon, toiling at the figure which was to stand for Margaret up at Holtspur. Why, here was the model for him. The living Margaret was here. These lovely movements and groupings should be the birthright of the children born at Holtspur. He would begin a new England up there in the Waste.

Presently the wonderful evening ended, and the people went out into the roaring and the darkness. Once again he helped his five into the car, and set off after them alone.

He did not have much talk with any of the five that night. He lay long awake listening to the storm and thinking of this Margaret Sorya. When he woke, at about five in the morning, the wind was still roaring, but he could see a star or two through his open window. He thought that if this troupe were going on to Sulhampton for a week's stay, they might, if they wished, stay with him and go and come by car. He

would see more of her thus. He prayed that they might choose to do this.

He rose early, as soon as it was light, and made himself a French breakfast, of strong black coffee and bread. Following his custom after any night of storm, he took a two-prong, and went along the brook, breaking up all the dams of branches and dead leaves. Going indoors presently, he found Sorya there reading *Who's Who*.

"I'm just looking you up," she said, "I hope you don't mind."

"That will give you the outline," he said. "Will you tell me something of yourself? Are you a Circassian?"

"I'm a South Russian. My grandmother was English. She was a Miss Holtspur from a place called Windlesham, in Berkshire."

"What?" he said. "But that is extraordinary. She was the daughter of the old man who made the money?"

Margaret seemed surprised at his knowledge. She nodded.

"Yes. But it was a run-away match, not much approved on either side. My mother always spoke English. My father was a landowner. He was taken away in the Revolution. We never heard, but we cannot doubt, that he was murdered. An old woman got us away, that is my mother and myself. My two brothers died before the War. It was a frightful time for Mother, of course, getting away, with me hanging on to her. I took it as a child will, not knowing about the danger. I used to be frightened at the shooting sometimes. We were very lucky in getting taken on board an English transport at Odessa; Mother's English was a real help then. We were taken to Prinkipo, where nobody wanted any of us. After a long time, we got to Paris, where Mother worked as a seamstress; some friends helped her and had me trained as a dancer."

"Is your mother alive still?"

"Yes, in Paris. She has done well as a dressmaker. She employs nine women now, and has saved enough to live on. She doesn't come to England. Her rather distant English cousins weren't at all helpful when we were in distress. There was a Mr. Holtspur of Windlesham, to whom she wrote."

This had been Margaret's father, Frampton supposed. He had not known him, but had heard that he was a hard man in his later years."

"Look here," Frampton said, "what you tell me about your being a Holtspur is very interesting to me. Here's breakfast, if you take that sort of thing. After breakfast, I want you to come out with me. I want to talk to you."

He left her then; he could not stand it any longer. He went out again along the brook and speared some dams. Zapritska, who could see him from her bed, wondered what the sacred *Anglais* was up to there, while she sipped her coffee and blew smoke-rings.

The Haulover was out of the way discreetly. The other four dancers were not yet down, and were not like to be down, the maids thought. Frampton presently found Sorya in the garden, looking at the long and lovely line of *Mullples* in the bright morning.

"Do you know England well?" he asked.

"No. I've danced here; a summer season in London, and two tours. I've danced in most countries, but I like England best, on the whole."

"On the whole I do," he said.

It struck her as an odd remark. She looked at him with interest and saw that he spoke sincerely. That was the first breaking of the ice between them.

"I was out, in that direction," she said, pointing up the

valley. "There is some building there. Is that another suburb?"

"It is a place I am building for some of my workers," he said. "I want to make some of my poisons here."

"It doesn't look quite the place for making poisons," she said.

"It's the very place," he said. "But my poisons are compounds which in other syntheses can be fertilisers and so forth. I can beat my swords into ploughshares in some cases."

"But the building is beautiful; even already one can see that; it is not a factory."

"You have been out there, already?" he said. "You saw the sort of chapter-house. I want my chaps to have all the chances I had myself."

"That isn't very usual among your countrymen," she said.

"It's a want that's growing," he said. "The wealth of a land isn't money, which is largely a fiction, when it isn't actually a fraud. Real wealth is intelligence, want of waste, want of folly, want of redundancy. The sort of thing you get in art and training. A land that has a people who are healthy and intelligent is a wealthy land. Looking at the world, I'd say that wealth's as rare as genius."

"And how do your people respond to your advance?" she asked.

"They are like all people. They respond to any call properly made. The worker's a bit mistrustful of an employer, and I don't wonder. The brain's been bred right out of half of both sides, in this thing called commerce. I put a lot of backs up, but some of my chaps have begun to see my point."

"I should think they have," she said, looking at him curiously; for she liked a generosity in men and employers, and had seen something of the harshness of commerce. She

had been told that the *Anglais* were mad, in their queer individualism, and odd personal worships. Here was one who wanted his chaps to have a chance, yet seemed to spend his spare time poking sticks in a brook.

He had meant to show her the portraits of Margaret where they hung on the wall in his room, but they had now turned up the stream together, past the house towards the lake. He had his two-prong with him, from old habit. The sun and the wind of the clearing weather made the valley marvellous to them; some little company of goldfinches picked at the thistle-down and flitted from their coming.

"I want to tell you something," Frampton said. "I was engaged to be married to Margaret Holtspur, a cousin of yours. She was killed in a motor-car, just before our wedding. I built this house for her. You are so like her. You can see how like you are. There's a set of photographs here; and there are portraits in the room at the end of the top floor there. I want you to look at them presently. You must forgive me. You'll think me pretty cool, to ask you here because of that. I had to tell you. There's a sort of cousin of yours, a bird-painter, in the wood yonder. You must meet him later. I'll leave these photographs with you and clear out."

He did this rather roughly, and was away at once, up to the lake, and along its north shore in great strides, jabbing at the scattered leaves as he passed. He went along to the lake end, then struck away into the covert, and so west to Spirr, where he found Timothy just up, frying bacon, while tits and chaffinches hopped about his untidy room.

"I want a word with you," Frampton said. "Do you know anything of some cousins of yours in Russia?"

"I know there used to be some," Timothy said, "but I think they rather got killed off in the troubles."

"They rather did," Frampton said grimly, "but some of them didn't, and one of them's up at the house. You'd better come up to lunch to meet her."

"O God, I'm not very tidy."

"Come as you are."

"I say, won't you sit down? I'll shove these books aside, then you can sit on the window-seat."

"You mind your bacon," Frampton said. "I'll do it."

He picked up the portfolios and drawing-books which littered the seat, shoved them aside and sat. Timothy finished the bacon, set it down and made coffee from the long-boiling kettle. Frampton, meanwhile, picked up a drawing-book and turned the pages. It was filled with charming little, fantastic drawings of a children's world of tiny people. The things were gay and delightful.

"What the devil have you been playing at?" Frampton asked.

"I say," Timothy said, "you aren't supposed to know about those. Those are private."

"They are not private," Frampton said. "Why haven't you shown me these? Don't you see, that these are the things you ought to be doing? You can do birds pretty well, but so can half a dozen men, and a lot better than you. But no one can do this. This is the real you. Why the devil didn't you show me these?"

Timothy blushed and was pleased, but looked a bit startled.

"I used to do them for Margaret sometimes, and she liked them. Lately, I've been doing them again for the Boy Scouts who come here; they all like them."

"Well, you come up to lunch, and we'll discuss the future. These things are the real thing, and put your nature studies behind the wainscot."

"About this Russian cousin," Timothy asked; "you said it was a she. Does she speak English?"

"Yes. She's like Margaret."

"All right. I suppose I'd better shave."

Frampton stayed talking with Timothy for a while, then turned back to the house.

"This cousin of yours is a ballet dancer," he said, as he left. "She has four friends with her, so you'd certainly better shave; and put on a tie, if that isn't asking too much."

"I've got a fine tie somewhere," Timothy said.

Frampton went back to the house wondering what had happened, while he had been at Spirr. He supposed that the Sorya would have looked at the photographs and then, perhaps, been moved to look at the portraits, and then, having realised how like she was to Margaret, and her effect upon himself, might have come to some decision about it. Anyhow, she would know now that he could not look upon her without being deeply moved, and moved in a way which most women would resent, not for any quality in herself, but for her resemblance to someone dead. He had pointed this out to her as delicately as he could; if she had fled, while he was away, he would understand.

But she had not fled. She was on the terrace, beside the long pond, when he came in. He had the feeling that she was waiting for him. She was looking at him with interest and some pity.

"Zeila Aranowski was saying that you have a theatre here," she said. "Is that true, or was it something that she didn't quite understand?"

"No, it's true. There it is, yonder. Would you care to see it? You'd better get a wrap, while I get the keys; you know how chill an unused theatre can be."

"I do know that," she said.

He led the way to the theatre.

"Are any of your sisters down?" he asked.

She thought not. They were having a long lie; later in the day they would have a practice, but for the moment they were enjoying life. He opened the door and let her into the green room and thence to the stage.

"This is the stage," he said. "It is rather long and narrow, and steeply raked. Will you wait a moment, while I go to my seat? I want to see you make your debut."

He vaulted down into the house and took his seat. With inimitable grace, she danced down to the footlights, and made the dancer's adorable reverence to the imaginary audience.

"I'm afraid the stage is too much raked for a ballet," he said.

"Not at all; it's only the back that's raked," she said. "This space here, the acting area, is barely raked at all. The backs of these old stages were used for display and what the old writers call perspectives, which gave illusions of distance. You could give adorable small ballets, with a few dancers and music by Gluck and Mozart. It is a wonderful place, and so beautiful."

"It's luck to have escaped the Gothic revivalist," he said. "He would have pulled it down and put up black and white rafters and pierced a few loop-holes for bows. But just when the Gothic chap was in charge, in matters of taste, it was in use as a kennel for hounds, and later as a fowl-house. It is pretty much as it was at first now, I think."

"But who built it?"

"One of these mad English," he said.

"And have you given many performances here?" she asked.

"I? No," he said. "There are no performers, and worse still, no audience here."

"I should have thought you would spend all your time here, giving performances."

"Not I. I spend my time inventing things that'll blast people dead without danger to the blaster. I make death swift for the receiver and comfortable to the giver. Anything that shortens war and limits the rule of generals in human affairs, that's the kind of thing I study. You said, a moment ago, that you will all have to do a practice or exercises some time to-day."

"We shall have to go in to Stubbington for that," she said, "to be with the others."

"Why not have them all out here and exercise in the theatre or in the court outside?" he suggested. "I can telephone and arrange it. You have a transport 'bus, and I could manage to bring some here; and I can give the party some tea later. Why not?"

Sorya could see no reason why not. It would be a pleasure to them all. As they walked back to the house, she said:

"I went to look at my cousin's portraits. I left your photographs of her on your table there."

"Thank you," he said. "For the moment we won't speak of that. You will understand that I had to show you."

He arranged for the company to come that afternoon to practise in the theatre. It chanced that the weather improved steadily as the day progressed. At two o'clock, the wind had died, and a hot autumn sun was shining, so that many people from Stubbington drove out to Stubbington Hill, behind Mullples, parked their cars, and came to the edge to see the view. It was at its best on a sunny autumn afternoon, when some trees were bare, and the others in different colours, when the autumn ploughing had turned up red, brown and yellow fields, and the green crops of roots had not been taken. In parts of this expanse flood water was gleaming. The view from

Mullples edge stretched away and away. Many who loved the view loved to come a little forward, so as to see *Mullples* Lake and the line of the severe roof ridge.

Among those who came forward, as it chanced, on this Sunday afternoon, were Mrs. Method-Methodde and her friends, the Morral-Galles. They had focussed their glasses on the blue smears in the distance, to see whether they could distinguish Burnt Top from Bildon, when they became aware of a bus near the court of *Mullples*, a yellow, rather battered bus, which had an air of knowing a thing or two. In the court-yard, a company of men and women appeared.

"Who can these be?" Mrs. Method-Methodde asked.

To the company came others, to wit the gun-man and his man, bearing what they could not identify upon a wheelbarrow. The thing was taken from the barrow. It was a gramophone. Distant as it was, a faint strain or two came to them from it, and the company began to dance.

"I've seen that thing," Mr. Morral-Galle said. "It's the *Circasses*; quite a well-known ballet."

"*Circasses*?" Mrs. Method-Methodde cried. "But those must be the Circassians who were at the Pitte Rooms. I wouldn't let my maids go. They looked a dreadful set. I saw two of them in the street. And Mr. Mansell has them out to dance on a Sunday."

Shocking as the sight was, she watched it. There they were, in the open air, dancing themselves to damnation, while preaching red revolution and doubtless practising free love. And on a Sunday, too. And the worst of it was that the earth didn't open to swallow them. They danced for a long time, and then all trooped away to the house.

"So," she concluded, "he is giving them tea; those people. Really, to bring those people to *Mullples*, which was once a

monastery, is a little too much. They had a dreadful poster in Stubbington which gave a lot of offence."

However, it was a new sin of the gunman's, and as such a good topic for talk.

As he watched the dancers, on his stage, Frampton thought:

"Why should they not dance a ballet here next Spring? Cobb longs to design for the ballet; the young poet whom I met longs to invent for it, and the musician Harold spoke of, whose work I so much liked, has all sorts of schemes. Why should they not get busy and make something for the Sorya and the others to dance here? It is true, there is no audience; but I shall have some people on the Waste then, and I'll get my main audience down from London. I'll make it a big thing. It is true, I know nothing of dance-writing, and know no one who does. But I'll get the best chap there is, when I've the fable and the music. And by Christmas, I myself will have learned all that a layman can learn of the art. These swine tried to stamp on Margaret, when they drew Spirr. They tried to stamp on Sorya, not coming to her dance yesterday. My Golly, they shall long to come to her dance here and not be asked. That'll make 'em squirm. These people will be touring England till after Christmas, and then go to the South of France for a short season. After that, I'll get them for my thing, or the best of them. I'll make this Sorya famous here, and this place famous, too, as the home of a new ballet."

Instantly, his mind seized on this new way of angering his neighbours. He was not one to do a thing by halves. As the dancers practised before him, a part of his shrewd brain went into the probable costs of a season of ballet there, while in another part came visions of a matchless *décor* by Cobb, and Sorya floating in upon it, *sur les pointes*; he would make it the loveliest thing.

He spoke of his thought to the company as he wished them farewell, and later went to his study to work out some of the details, and to telephone (as was his way), while the idea was hot in him, to poet, painter and musician. There came a tap at his study door. Sorya and Marianela were there. He rose with a leaping heart and led them in.

"We came to see you," Sorya said, "because we speak English better than the others, and some of them are a little shy. They ask us to thank you for your kindness to us all and to say how much they enjoyed being in your theatre."

"They thanked me thoroughly before they went," he said. "It was a great pleasure to me to have them here. I want to say to you, that I am serious about using the theatre. Now, I have some ideas of doing ballets here in May or June, and I want you both to come to dance for me."

"We gladly will," they promised.

"I will ask Mlle. Marianela to repeat some of her triumphs. And I want you to do the *Red Waterlilies* and to dance the lead in a ballet I have in my mind. I have the idea. I know the men who can work it out. I mean to make the festival here a very splendid thing, and I do want you to be in it."

"I'd love to be in it," she said. "If you want some of our company, I'm sure they will be delighted to come here. Pitowski was enchanted with your theatre. Our people are very much better dancers than you might think from seeing them in that *taudis* yesterday. Pitowski has been very famous and most of them could go to-morrow into the Imperial Ballet if it still existed."

She thought a moment, while Marianela asked practical questions about who would direct. Presently, Sorya spoke again; she had been watching Frampton with a minute attention. He was unlike anybody she had ever met or heard

of; he had come already queerly within the armour.

"There is something that might interest you," she said. "You may not know that the original *Red Waterlilies* had what was called the flute scene, which they flung out. The music and the costume designs for it are too beautiful for words. Ortiz has the designs in Paris still, and I expect Kaianovitch still has the flute music. But the two would be frightfully costly, of course. I heard some of the flute music; it is unlike anything ever done. It is for the end of the play where the girl joins the water spirits. All the managements boggled at the cost, so that it has never been done."

"Well," he said, "I'm here to do what I can for the arts. I may as well do the thing in style. But this is a little theatre and the designs may be overwhelming to the small stage."

"They were not meant for a big stage," she said. The *Papillon* only seated four hundred and fifty. That made the margin of profit so small."

"I'll get you, then, to put me in touch with Ortiz and Kaianovitch."

"You'll meet Kaianovitch to-morrow at Sulhampton, if you come there," she said. "He's coming there to conduct his Mass at the Abbey."

"I shall come to Sulhampton," he said.

Some minutes before the curtain rose on the *Red Waterlilies* at the Mullples May Festival, Frampton knocked on the door of Sorya's dressing-room. He carried a great bunch of red carnations. He found her standing in front of her pier-glass, ready to go on. She had some red geranium petals in her fingers; with these she was adding a faint touch of colour to her cheeks. As he entered, the crumpled red frailties fell to the floor. He had never seen her so beautiful.

"I came to wish you good luck," he said. "A few people are still coming in. You'll have two minutes still."

"I'm just gibbering with nerves," she said.

"You don't look it. Look here; when I saw you in that barrack at Stubbington that time, I thought you were my Margaret come back. It meant the world to me. Since then, I've been coming to care for you, as I hope you know, not any shadow, please believe, but you. The dead are at rest and gone on; but I think she led you to me. I've brought you these red flowers. If you can care for me at all, I want you to dance the last scene with one of these flowers between your lips; then I shall know."

She looked at him curiously, with shining eyes. The call-girl, Marianela's sister, came tapping at the doors. "Beginners on," she was saying. The first of the three silver trumpets, which were to give the curtain signal, sounded in the adjacent wing. The passage outside was noisy suddenly with moving feet and rustling costumes.

"Good luck," Frampton said, taking her hand suddenly. "Good luck; I must cut."

He slipped out of the door into the passage. Members of the cast, whom he could not recognise in their paints and costumes, were hanging in the wings. He saw Pitowski and Godelof. Godelof's mouth was working; she was hanging on to two others of the cast, whom he could not name; all three were very nervous.

"Courage," he said. "It will be all right directly you're on."

They looked at him with wan smiles. The two trumpets blew their blast. He slipped through the stage door to the side of the auditorium, and took his seat. He knew that a great many eyes were turned upon him. He heard a girl say:

"That's Mr. Mansell, just sitting down now."

The people in the house settled and became tenser; he had given the strictest orders that no member of the audience was to enter the theatre after the second trumpet. There was now no hurried shuffling to seats; all were seated. The house lights went out; the front stage lights flashed on. The three silver trumpeters appeared, one centre, the others in the wings. Lifting their trumpets, they blew the third blowing, with the air of three Rolands scattering paganism for ever. When they disappeared, the orchestra broke out into the prelude.

The history of the Mullples May Festival has been written by another hand. It has been famous, and has made many people famous, dancers, designers, musicians and poets. It was, while it lasted, the most interesting ballet festival in the world; it ran for one fortnight in each year, for seven years.

What it cost Frampton Mansell can never be known; perhaps in all about fifty thousand pounds, for he imported his musicians, dancers and stage hands and had to house and feed them. But that is all history. At the first performance there were present all Little London's most elegant four hundred, including all London's critics. Twenty-three Bright Young Things, including Pob and Pinkie, were turned away by the police for attempted gate-crashing. More than seven hundred persons came out from Stubbington and Tatchester to see the cars enter the car-park. The weather was a deep anti-cyclone centred over Oxford.

It was noticed that when Sorya took her call at the end of the *Red Waterlilies*, she bore between her lips the red carnation with which she had danced the last scene. She has been known since as the Lady with the Red Carnation. Tenor Cobb's painting of her with the red carnation between her lips (his masterpiece) is now in the Tate Gallery, and

a replica of it hangs in the beautiful town of Melbourne.

She married Frampton Mansell in the June of the first year of the festival.

Frampton Mansell still makes guns and weapons of destruction; but his main interest now is the Red Carnation Theatre of Ballet, in Russell Square. He built and equipped this theatre; he has already made it the most delightful place in London.

Mullples is now a part of St. Margarets, which has become not only the most beautiful garden city in the world, but a part of the Margaret Holtspur National Park. The wood of Spirr (now usually called Holtspur) runs back into Stubbington Great Wood now, and forward almost as far as Coombe. It is well known now to naturalists and nature-lovers; there are beavers in the valley; hoopoes and bitterns nest there; the golden oriole has been introduced and a pair of — have nested twice and this year raised a brood. Timothy asks me not to say what these birds are.

Frampton and his wife and children frequently go there. The house is a guest-house for nature students and for the young people qualifying for work in the Red Carnation Theatre. Faringdon's bronzes in the midst of St. Margarets draw many visitors from all over the world. The Stubbington guide-book urges all visitors to the district to be sure to see them. I write, of course, in this present year of 1955.

The Tunster no longer meet at Tibb's Cross; the national preserve has squeezed them out. Colonel Cuttand-Thrustum has lately taken them over, and told a Press representative yesterday that he hopes to give as good sport as his predecessor.

St. Margarets is a most beautiful place, now that time has

made it look like the beloved homes of men. Its first suggestion was a desire to hurt; its first impulse was one of indignation. Indignation has been said to be the voice of God, at whose bidding so many angels rush with fire and the beauty of lilies and songs of exultation.

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